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ABSTRACT

This mini-unit was designed to help high school students make sense of the complex issues raised by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, while letting them form their own conclusions about the direction of U.S. foreign policy. In the course of a five-day lesson plan, students have an opportunity to put recent events into perspective, deepen their knowledge of the Soviet Union, and join with their fellow classmates in assessing the United States' future role in the region. Students begin by considering how the final collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 altered the U.S. foreign policy agenda. They then explore three clearly defined options for U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union, namely, strengthen the Newly Independent Republics, Support a Stable Russia, or Mind Our Own Business. Three background articles provide a context for the options, helping students reach an informed understanding of the choices they face. With a better grasp of the Soviet Union's past and present problems, students are equipped to participate in a role playing activity based on the three options. Ultimately, the sequence of lessons is intended to guide students as they develop their own ideas about U.S. policy toward the former Cold War enemy, and finally, clarify their own values and beliefs about the U.S. role in the world. Three appendices contain lesson plans and student activities, abridged background articles, and topics for further consideration. (DB)

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CHOICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Facing A Disintegrated Soviet Union

ALTERNATIVES FOR PUBLIC DEBATE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

A project of the Center for Foreign Policy Development

Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912

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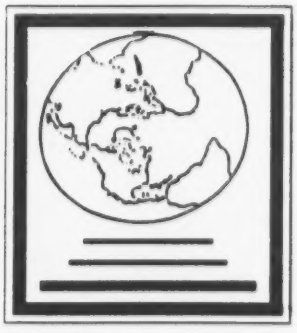

THE CHOICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION PROJECT was established at the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University to help citizens (student and adult) think constructively about foreign policy issues, to increase public interest in foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgment on policy priorities.

THE CENTER FOR FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENT at Brown is a non-profit research organization. Its mandate is to bring together scholars, policymakers, and the public in a search for policy choices that can lead to a consensus on U.S. national security and foreign policy.

The Study Circles Resource Center offers an edition of this material for adult study groups. To order, write: SCRC, Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258.

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CHOICES
for the 21st Century Education Project

January 1992

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Note to Teachers

The issues surrounding the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the future of U.S relations with the newly independent republics have left many Americans confused and perplexed. For high school students, in particular, understanding the concerns of the new republics, the uncertain pace of economic reform, and the changing nature of the nuclear threat is a daunting assignment. This mini-unit has been designed to help students make sense of these complex topics as they form their own conclusions about the direction of U.S. foreign policy.

As the table of contents indicates, the Student Text contains the basic core of the unit. Note that an abridged version of the background articles is also available (see Appendix B). For advanced students, you may choose to distribute only the first page of the options -- without Beliefs and Arguments.

In the course of a five-day lesson plan, students will have an opportunity to put recent events into perspective, deepen their knowledge of Soviet history, and join with their fellow classmates in assessing our country's future role in the region. Students will begin by considering how the final collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has altered the U.S. foreign policy agenda. They will then explore three clearly defined options for U.S. policy toward the former Soviet Union. The three background articles provide a context for the options, helping students reach an informed understanding of the choices they face. With a better grasp of past and present problems in the region, students will be equipped to participate in a role play activity based on the three options. Ultimately, the sequence of lessons is intended to guide students as they develop their own ideas about U.S. policy toward our former Cold War enemy, and finally, clarify their own values and beliefs about our country's role in the world.

Below is an outline of the Five-Day Lesson Plan. (Note the Alternative Three-Day Lesson Plan on page 29. For ideas on developing a three to four week unit around *Facing a Disintegrated Soviet Union*, see Topics for Further Consideration on page 43 and Suggested Reading on page 44.)

Day One

1. Thinking about changes in U.S.-Soviet relations (20-25 minutes)
2. Putting U.S. options in perspective (20-25 minutes)

Homework: Students read the introduction, the three background articles, and complete the study guide

Day Two

1. Fleshing out the options (15 minutes)
2. Role playing the three options: organization and preparation (30 minutes)

Homework: Students complete *Considering Your Option* to prepare for the role play

Day Three

1. Role playing the three options: presentations of the options (45 minutes)

Homework: Students develop opposing arguments directed against the other options

Day Four

1. Role playing the three options: debate and discussion (20-30 minutes)
2. Exploring the options (15-25 minutes)

Homework: Students complete *Focusing Your Thoughts* and *My Option Four*

Day Five

1. Beyond option four (45 minutes)

Extra Challenge Homework: Students write a letter to a newspaper or a member of Congress based on their option four

Facing a Disintegrated Soviet Union
Alternatives for Public Debate and Policy Development

Introduction
Three Options: A Framework for Discussion

As it entered World War II, the United States had only the sixteenth largest army in the world -- smaller than those of Spain, Turkey and Poland. When the war was over, many in the United States wanted to return to our nation's long-standing foreign policy -- sometimes called isolationism. But by 1945 the United States had emerged as the most powerful military and economic force in the world, and U.S. policymakers concluded that only the United States could protect the world from the threat of Soviet communism.

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union waged a bitter cold war that lasted nearly forty-five years. Each side tried to export its own ideology around the world, but neither side would allow the other to make a move unanswered. It was in many ways a sort of ideological trench warfare. The two sides were solidly dug in, though the battle lines constantly shifted, and neither side gained much ground -- that is, until 1989.

That year marked a turning point in world history as the Berlin Wall fell and the era of a Europe divided into two ideologically opposed camps drew to a close. The changes already underway in the Soviet Union were less dramatic but no less profound. The USSR, it seemed, was steadily, if slowly, progressing on the path to reform. Accordingly, superpower tensions were reduced, paving the way to new arms control agreements and global cooperation.

Then on August 19, 1991, hard-liners in the Soviet Union, unhappy with losing their European empire and fearing that Mikhail Gorbachev was giving up too much power to the leaders of the fifteen republics that made up the Soviet Union, staged a coup. It collapsed three days later, and Gorbachev returned to Moscow from imprisonment at his vacation home in the Crimea. Upon his return, Gorbachev tried desperately to create a new union, but instead the USSR steadily unraveled. Three of the former republics immediately gained independence while ten of the remaining twelve declared their intention to become independent. In December, leaders of the largest republics signed an agreement to form the new Commonwealth of Independent States and pronounced the death of the old union. The United States soon responded by recognizing the independence of the twelve republics. As 1991 came to a close, the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist.

Americans must now take this opportunity to decide what U.S. foreign policy should be in the face of the Soviet Union's disintegration. In order to bring this subject into clearer focus, the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project, drawing on the research of the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University, has produced a framework of options for U.S. policy toward the former Soviet Union.

You will be presented with three options that offer very different approaches for the United States to take toward the republics of the former Soviet Union. As you read, bear in mind that each of the options expresses a point of view shared by many Americans. Each option rests on different assumptions about the nature of global affairs, the threats facing our country, and the proper U.S. role in the world. Despite their differences, however, supporters of each option would agree that all Americans hope to see the growth of democracy, peace between the United States and the new republics, freedom for all peoples, and a stable international economy. Still, they must answer the same question that you are about to tackle: What should our country should do in response to the changes taking place in the former Soviet Union? As you consider this question, you will have an opportunity to contribute to an important debate.

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Options in Brief

Option 1: Strengthen the Newly Independent Republics

The remarkable political changes that brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union have made it possible for each of the newly independent republics to take control of their future. The newly independent republics have the right to determine their own future, and we must treat them as equal members of the international community. This is the only way to guarantee a fundamental and lasting change in the former Soviet Union and a permanent end to the old empire. This course of action is the only way to remain true to our own founding principles and promote the development of peaceful democracy in the former Soviet Union.

Option 2: Support a Stable Russia

The collapse of the Soviet Union marks a victory for U.S. foreign policy while raising new worries for Americans. In the current atmosphere of uncertainty, the United States must act as the anchor of international order. That means making the stability of Russia our top priority in the former Soviet Union. Ultimately, only Russia has the power to maintain stability in this potentially explosive region that includes more than 30,000 nuclear warheads and one hundred national groups. The United States must play an active role in guiding Russia toward a system much like our own. After struggling so long to defeat our Cold War enemy, we would now be foolish not to lend a hand to our new-found friend.

Option 3: Mind Our Own Business

For nearly forty-five years after World War II, we stationed troops in Europe, sent our forces around the world, and spent hundreds of billions of dollars to counter the Soviet threat. But today the Soviet Union is no more. We should take this opportunity to turn our attention on our own pressing domestic concerns and focus our foreign policy on the defense of the Americas. The United States should serve as a role model for the world to follow -- a model of stability, democracy and economic prosperity. If we want other nations to continue to look to the United States for moral leadership, however, we must remedy our domestic problems. The people of the new republics know best what they must do to reform their own society. Meanwhile, this rare time of peace gives us an opportunity to put our house in order, and to remain a society worthy of emulation.

The Republics of the Soviet Union

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was made up of fifteen **republics** (see map). They developed from what were separate nations, with distinct cultural identities, histories and native languages. For centuries before the birth of the Soviet Union, these peoples lived in what some have called the "prison house of nations," the Russian Empire.

Changing from the Russian Empire to the USSR

The Russian Empire was a huge territory which, at its largest in the 19th century, stretched from the eastern boundary of Alaska, across Asia and into Europe, including most of present-day Poland and Finland. At the outbreak of World War I, Ukrainians, Estonians, Russians and other ethnic groups in the current Soviet Union were all living under the rule of the **tsar**.

The Russian Empire began to break up as World War I ended. The Russian tsar, Nicholas II, abdicated in March 1917, in the face of great political pressure. At the same time, a new nationalism was on the rise throughout the empire. This **nationalism** was being expressed as the desire of a people with a common language and history to have their own state. By the time Vladimir Ilyich Lenin came to power in a second revolution, in October 1917, the people of the old empire were on their way to creating their own states, and becoming independent for the first time in centuries. This, however, was a difficult, often violent, transition.

Self-determination, the right of peoples to form their own states, was a major political idea in the wake of the fighting between empires in World War I. In fact, the ideals were promoted by people as politically dissimilar as Woodrow Wilson and Lenin. Considering this environment, it is not surprising that there were many new states created after World War I. From the Russian Empire alone, several former territories gained independence as part of the postwar peace settlement, including Poland, Finland and the three **Baltic countries** of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In 1917, Lenin proclaimed the birth of a communist government in the new Russian Socialist Republic. Other peoples of the old empire, most notably the Ukrainians, Byelorussians and the people of the Transcaucasus (including Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis), took this opportunity to declare the existence of their own independent states.

Lenin faced an almost immediate challenge from those who opposed his communist rule. Lenin's communist forces, the Reds, fought a civil war against the Whites, a coalition of several opponents, including Russians who led the earlier revolution and nationalists in these new republics, and a few troops from France, Great Britain, and the United States. Lenin's goal was to solidify his control over Russia and to aid the communist revolution in the newly established nations bordering Russia. The fighting went on for three years and was particularly fierce in Ukraine, where Lenin used the Red Army to support a series of communist coups against the Ukrainian nationalist government. By 1921, communists, with the help of the Red Army, had taken over the governments of most of the new nations in the region.

By 1922, ten republics, all within the territory of the old empire, joined in a union with the Russian Republic to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.[1] Originally, the USSR was a union of independent states, each of which had similar communist governments. But within a few years time, these republics lost much of their sovereignty and were under direct rule from Moscow.

New territory was added to the USSR in 1940 when, under an agreement between the Soviet Union and Germany, Adolf Hitler allowed Stalin to overrun lands along the Soviet Union's western border in exchange for a pledge of nonaggression.[2] Four of these territories (the three independent Baltic countries and a part of Romania renamed Moldavia) were forcibly added to the USSR as new republics, while the remaining territory was incorporated into the preexisting republics of Byelorussia (now called Belarus) and Ukraine. The United States never recognized the legality of the incorporation of the Baltic states.

Stalin launched a campaign to strengthen his control over the republics by brutally clamping down on dissent. During the Great Terror, as it was called, hundreds of thousands of Soviets were killed, and concentration

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1. Some of these republics were admitted as "autonomous republics" at this time as a first step toward becoming full republics. The last of these (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) became full republics in 1936.

2. This pact is called the Molotov-Ribbentropp Pact, named for the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union and Germany respectively.

camps were set up across Siberia. By the time of his death in 1953, Stalin had succeeded in centralizing all power in Moscow. The communists he appointed to head the republics obediently followed the instructions of the Soviet leadership in the Kremlin. Although Stalin's successors eased the atmosphere of terror Stalin had used to keep power, they still kept the system of **centralized government** intact.

Nationalities in the Soviet Union: diversity, Russification, and current problems

The union created from fifteen republics, spread out across eleven time zones, was tremendously diverse. At least one hundred different national groups lived within the USSR. When Lenin put the union together, he inherited conflicts between nationalities over land and religion which had existed in the days of the Russian Empire. He also inherited a feeling of resentment among non-Russians toward Russians. For centuries other ethnic groups in the region have been dominated by the larger, more powerful, Russian population. Both the conflict among the many nationalities and the tensions caused by Russian domination of the region are linked together and called the **nationalities issue**.

Lenin's nationalities policy was based on the self-determination of people on the one hand, and the hope that all republics would unite in a common effort to expand communist ideals on the other. But this did not naturally occur, so Soviet leaders beginning with Stalin often devised policies to make national differences disappear. Soviet leaders had different ways of bringing about their goal of submerging national identities. Stalin had a particularly brutal approach. He enacted policies that caused the deaths of millions of people and destroyed the native culture of many peoples. His economic policies typically broke the historic bonds between people and their land. For example, in the republic of Kazakhstan, nomads were forced to give up herding and settle down on state-controlled farms. As many as one-third of the Kazakh people died from starvation and Soviet repression. Similarly, in Ukraine, Stalin replaced the Ukrainian farming system with forced collectivization, demanding that peasants turn over their entire harvest to the Soviet state. As many as six million Ukrainians died from starvation.

After Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet leaders tried different, less brutal methods of breaking down national identities. Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev both sought to erase cultural distinctions by replacing them with a new single identity. They tried to create one identity that everyone could share, based on common communist values, so that people would begin to consider themselves Soviets, instead of Uzbeks or Latvians or Georgians. Soviet leaders enforced the **Russification** of society: instead of dozens of different languages and cultures within the USSR, the Russian language, literature and culture were promoted as the common heritage of all Soviets.

By the time **Mikhail Gorbachev** came to power in 1985, however, it was clear that the efforts to destroy national identities, or replace them with a new Soviet one, had not completely worked. In fact, some of the policies after World War II had the effect of strengthening the resolve of many national groups to hold onto their separate identities. There are several reasons why differences remained in the Soviet Union after seventy years. Among them:

--Non-Russian nationalities resented the Russian domination of the system. Russian was the official language of all government proceedings and of all economic transactions throughout the Union. Russians, while only about fifty percent of the total population of the USSR, held around seventy-five percent or more of the top offices in Soviet government and the Communist Party. Even in many non-Russian republics, Russians are a major presence. For example, there are about as many Russians as Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. In addition, the Kremlin usually made sure that a Russian held the second highest post in each republic.

Russian domination of society was perhaps most clearly illustrated by looking at economic policy in the USSR. The Soviet economy was run by central planning agencies, and these agencies were largely controlled by Russians. The non-Russian republics often complained that Moscow showed little regard for the feelings of the local population. In the 1950s, for example, Latvia was targeted for rapid industrialization. When the large factories were built, hundreds of thousands of non-Latvians, primarily Russians, migrated into the Baltic republic. This program polluted many of Latvia's rivers and lakes, and made Latvians a minority in their own capital city.

--Moscow officially maintained that Soviet policies eliminated nationalities conflicts. In reality, many conflicts were largely ignored and remained unresolved. In recent years, a number of disputes between rival nationalities have turned violent. The conflict between the neighboring republics of

Armenia and Azerbaijan is a case in point. Ethnic Armenians who live in a region of Azerbaijan called Nagorno Karabakh have demanded that they be reunited with the republic of Armenia. The Azerbaijani government, however, has rejected the Armenians' demands. Both sides pointed to different parts of the Soviet Constitution to support their claim. Decades of political conflict have boiled over into deadly clashes along the border of the two republics since 1988, and have produced 500,000 refugees.

--Economic disparity in the Soviet Union became a particularly divisive issue because the inequality broke down along national lines. The Central Asian republics had a much lower standard of living, less trade, fewer resources, and poorer education than the European republics of the Baltics, Russia, Byelorussia and Ukraine, creating the feeling among the people of Central Asia that they had been left behind in the process of economic development.

Crises in the republics: 1985-1991

Mikhail Gorbachev instituted the policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) to try to reform the stagnating Soviet system. In 1987 he launched a campaign to democratize the Soviet Union, releasing thousands of political prisoners, most of whom were non-Russian dissidents. These policies had the unintended side effect of taking the lid off simmering nationalities conflicts. New freedom gave people in the republics a long-awaited opportunity to voice their concerns and feelings. While Gorbachev emphasized that his reforms were intended primarily to boost economic efficiency, many republics began to express their national aspirations. By the end of 1987, small demonstrations began in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia calling for independence. In February 1988, demonstrations of up to one million people in Armenia illustrated the appeal of national issues even more dramatically.

Gorbachev worked to keep the Soviet Union together. He warned that *perestroika* was launched to strengthen, not undermine, the Union. The Soviet leader rejected the Baltic appeal for independence and insisted that the USSR was indivisible. To limit protest, he authorized troops to stop unofficial demonstrations. But Gorbachev dealt with the Baltics very differently from the way other Soviet leaders had responded to previous uprisings in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Wherever possible, Gorbachev sought to avoid using force to crack down on the Baltic protests. When Lithuania declared its independence in May 1990, Gorbachev responded primarily with an economic boycott, including cutting off heating oil to the Baltic republic. The Soviet leader, however, was not always able to resist pressure from hard-line officials for firmer measures. In the case of Lithuania, Gorbachev sent in troops to occupy Communist Party property and round up young men who refused to be drafted into the Soviet army. Gorbachev's actions received criticism from Western leaders, including U.S. president George Bush. But the economic boycott achieved part of Gorbachev's goal: the Baltics did not rescind their declarations of independence, but they did agree to slow down their independence effort.

Although the independence campaigns of the three Baltic republics received the most attention in the United States, other non-Russian republics also had important concerns. In Ukraine, the impact of nuclear power plants on the environment captured widespread interest. Although it represented less than three percent of Soviet territory, Ukraine produced forty percent of the USSR's nuclear energy. In 1986, a nuclear plant in the Ukrainian town of Chernobyl exploded, forcing people to abandon dozens of nearby towns and villages. Both Ukrainians and their neighbors to the north, the Byelorussians, also struggled against Soviet efforts to snuff out their national cultures. Although they and the Russians share common Slavic roots, the Byelorussians and Ukrainians worry that their distinct languages are being overwhelmed by Russian. Byelorussian writers, for example, complained in 1986 that only five percent of the books published in their republic were in Byelorussian.

Moldavia (now called Moldova) lies to the west of Ukraine. Before Soviet rule, Moldavia had been the Romanian province of Bessarabia. In recent years, many Moldavians have rallied behind the cause of reuniting their republic with Romania. In the Transcaucasus as well, the desire for independence has spurred activism. This has been the case among the Georgians. The Georgian Republic, however, is home to a number of smaller nationalities, such as the Abkhazis, Adjars, and Ossetians. These groups have clashed with Georgians over questions of local autonomy. In Georgia's neighboring Transcaucasian republics, Armenia and Azerbaijan, political differences have added to the tensions surrounding the issue of Nagorno Karabakh. Armenia's democratic government set out on a gradual path toward independence, while in Azerbaijan, Communists maintained a tight grip on power.

In the five Muslim republics of Central Asia as well, Communist authorities resisted change. Traditionally, people in this area have suffered the worst poverty in the Soviet Union. In Uzbekistan, for example, nearly half the workers have been employed in cotton farming and have received wages that are below the official Soviet poverty line. Moscow's demands on Central Asia to produce cotton have also led to environmental disaster. To irrigate farmland, rivers flowing into the Aral Sea have been diverted. As a result, the inland sea has gradually shrunk and left behind a dry lakebed polluted with agricultural chemicals. Winds have carried toxic dust from the Aral Sea throughout Central Asia and are partly blamed for giving Turkmenistan one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. New political movements in Central Asia have sought greater power to control the development of local economies.

Finally, the Russians raised their own concerns under Gorbachev. Although they dominated the Soviet Union, many Russians contended that communism destroyed traditional Russian values rooted in peasant customs and the Russian Orthodox Church. Russian President **Boris Yeltsin**, himself a former Communist, has appealed to the strengths of the Russian past while emphasizing the importance of creating a modern democracy.

It was fairly clear that by the end of 1990 not all the republics wanted to become independent states. But it was also clear that the republics wanted greater autonomy in return for staying in the union. In the Baltics, a strong political movement, with a great deal of popular support and the backing of the Western world, made declarations of independence from the Soviet Union. Leaders of Georgia, Armenia and Moldavia began independence drives as well, but they did not get the world support that the Baltics enjoyed, and they soon realized that their chances for immediate independence were slimmer. The other nine republics did not make claims of independence, however. Either because they did not feel they had a realistic chance of becoming independent at that time, or because they simply did not want to leave the Union, they chose a more moderate course of action and only declared themselves to be sovereign -- saying they could control what went on inside their republic, and that the laws of the republic took precedence over the laws of the whole USSR.

In 1991, Gorbachev and the republics began working toward forming a new Soviet Union. By August, six republics -- the Baltics, plus Moldavia, Armenia and Georgia -- had formally expressed their intention to leave the USSR and become independent states. The other nine republics were ready to agree to stay in the Union in exchange for local control over most economic and social decisions. A "Treaty of Union"[3] was ready to be signed when hard-line communists launched a coup on August 19. Most observers agree that the coup organizers feared the union treaty would greatly reduce the power of the central government. The plotters, however, had little active support outside the top ranks of the Communist Party. Within three days, their coup collapsed.

The final months of the Soviet Union

Following the August 1991 coup, the pace of change in the Soviet Union accelerated. Boris Yeltsin, who had stood up to the forces of the coup from atop a tank in front of the Russian parliament building, moved boldly to transfer power from the central government to the Russian Republic. At the same time, the three Baltic republics were recognized as independent states by the world community and given their own seats at the United Nations. One by one, ten of the remaining twelve republics likewise declared their independence from Moscow.[4]

The final death blow to the Soviet Union came in early December, when a solid majority of Ukrainians voted for independence. Without the rich farmland, heavy industry, and fifty-two million people of Ukraine, Gorbachev's efforts to negotiate a new union treaty were doomed. Instead, leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia announced the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Unlike Gorbachev's approach, the CIS has no provision for a central government. Decisions are to be made by a joint council of republican leaders. By the end of December, all of the remaining Soviet republics except Georgia had joined the CIS. The Soviet Union had officially come to an end.

Unable to hold the USSR together, Gorbachev resigned as Union president on December 25, 1991. Within hours, President George Bush announced that the United States would recognize the independence

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3. This was also called the "nine-plus-one" agreement between the nine republics that wanted to stay and the central government in the Kremlin.

4. Only Russia and Kazakhstan did not formally declare their independence before December 1991.

of the republics and open diplomatic relations with six of them: Armenia, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia (now called Kyrgyzstan), Russia, and Ukraine. Bush said that relations would begin with the other republics when they "made commitments to responsible security policies and democratic principles."

Obstacles facing the republics

Even as leaders of the newly independent republics hailed the creation of the CIS, problems in the former Soviet Union were mounting. The decline of central authority in the months following the coup had in fact opened up a new set of disputes involving Russia. On a general level, many non-Russians fear a resurgence of Russian nationalism, which has been the driving force behind Russian domination of the region. They were especially upset when Russian leaders suggested that Russia's borders with neighboring republics might have to be reconsidered. Twenty-five million Russians live outside their native republic in the former Soviet Union. In much of eastern Ukraine, northern Kazakhstan, and elsewhere, they constitute a majority of the population. After the coup, Russians in eastern Moldavia went so far as to proclaim the region they predominate a separate republic. Although Yeltsin has recently said that he would not press for border changes, many non-Russians remain concerned about the long-term ambitions of their huge neighbor.

Meanwhile, a number of non-Russian Muslim peoples within Russia have grown restive. The most dramatic example has come in the North Caucasus, home to a variety of Muslim peoples who fiercely resisted Russian conquest until the middle of the 1800s. In October 1991, nationalists among the Chechens seized buildings belonging to the central government in the Checheno-Ingushetia Autonomous Republic. The Russian parliament responded by ordering members of the newly formed Chechen national guard to give up their weapons and surrender the offices they had occupied. Chechen leaders refused. The crisis intensified later in the month when Chechen voters elected a fiery ex-general as their president and an independent Chechen republic was proclaimed.

Although the 735,000 Chechens hardly represent a threat to the security of Russia, Russian leaders worry that they may serve as an example to other non-Russian peoples. Initially, Yeltsin attempted to deal forcefully with the challenge. In November, he imposed a state of emergency in the Checheno-Ingushetia Autonomous Republic. Deputies in the Russian legislature, however, criticized the move as provocative and pressured the Russian president to call instead for a negotiated settlement. Nonetheless, a tense stand-off remained even after the birth of the CIS.

In Russia's relations with other newly independent republics, the fate of the Soviet military has loomed as the largest question. Recently, Russia and Ukraine butted heads over control of the naval fleet based in the Black Sea. Yeltsin claimed that the fleet belonged to Russia while Leonid Kravchuk, president of Ukraine, insisted that members of the old Soviet armed forces on Ukrainian territory pledge their loyalty to his republic. The impasse over the Black Sea fleet was not resolved until January, when Yeltsin and Kravchuk agreed to divide up the forces between the two republics. The Black Sea fleet, however, may only be the first of many disputes between Russia and its neighbors over military matters. Russia has proposed that the forces of the former Soviet Union remain unified under the control of the CIS. There is agreement that nuclear weapons should be overseen by a single command structure, but at least six of the republics, including Ukraine, want to form their own conventional armies. They contend that preserving the old Soviet Army within the framework of the CIS would ensure continued Russian domination.

Even without differences over the military, the republics of the former Soviet Union must grapple with a range of other problems they have inherited from their Soviet past. The economic sphere is especially complicated. The Soviet effort to create a homogeneous society tied the republics together so tightly that it is now difficult, if not impossible, for them to survive on their own. The integration of the communication, transportation and manufacturing systems has hampered individual republics from doing business with the rest of the world. One illustration of how the republics are linked together is the Soviet rail system: most of the train tracks in the republics are a different size than those in the rest of Europe, making it possible to travel or ship goods by train within the former Soviet Union, but very difficult to reach the outside world.

At the same time, most republics did not produce a wide variety of goods, but instead played a specialized role in the larger economy. For example, two-thirds of all the cotton in the Soviet Union came from Uzbekistan, most of the oil refining equipment from Azerbaijan, the televisions from Byelorussia, and much of the wheat from Ukraine. In many cases, production was so specialized that there was only one factory in the entire Soviet Union that made a certain item.

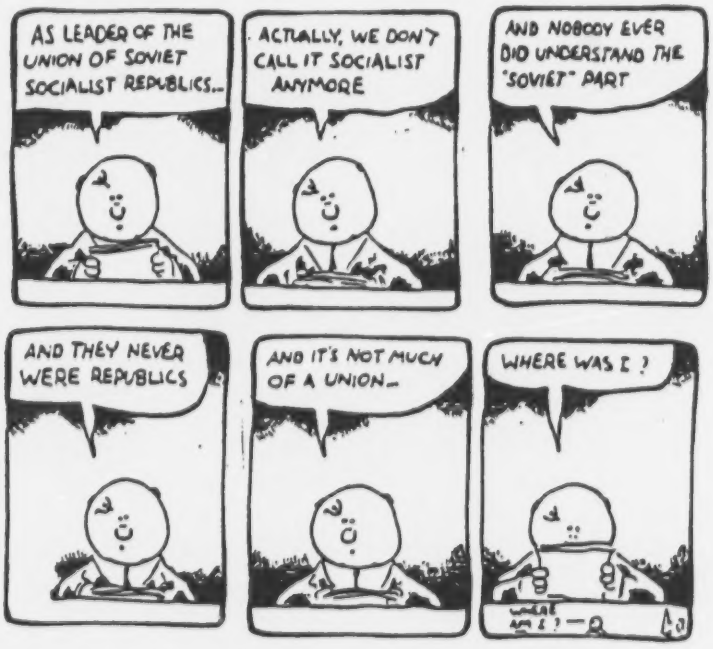
Just as complicated is the issue of ethnic relations in the periphery of the former Soviet Union. Besides discord pitting Russians against non-Russians, there are also many conflicts between non-Russian nationalities. In Georgia, for example, the people of South Ossetia proclaimed their area an independent republic in November 1991. For two years, Georgian authorities have used force to squelch the Ossetians' drive for self-determination. Under Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a long-time foe of communism who was elected president in May 1991, Georgian forces blockaded South Ossetia and shelled rebellious towns. More than 300 people have died in the fighting. In January 1992, Gamsakhurdia was forced from power by opponents in the Georgian capital, but the status of South Ossetia has yet to be resolved. With small national groups throughout the former Soviet Union now asserting their distinctiveness, a period of ethnic conflict may be only beginning.

Questions for Consideration

The future of the republics raises very complex questions. In individual republics, who should protect minority ethnic groups from persecution? What should the Russian Republic do about the twenty-five million Russians living in other republics? If violence erupts, as in the situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan, who should step in to break up the fighting? In general, how should conflicts between republics be resolved?

What concerns should we have about the Russian Republic? Why do many fear the return of Russian nationalism? Should the United States be concerned about this?

What would you like to see happen? What role can or should the United States play in these issues?


AS LEADER OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS...
ACTUALLY, WE DON'T CALL IT SOCIALIST ANYMORE
AND NOBODY EVER DID UNDERSTAND THE "SOVIET" PART
AND THEY NEVER WERE REPUBLICS
AND IT'S NOT MUCH OF A UNION...
WHERE WAS I ?

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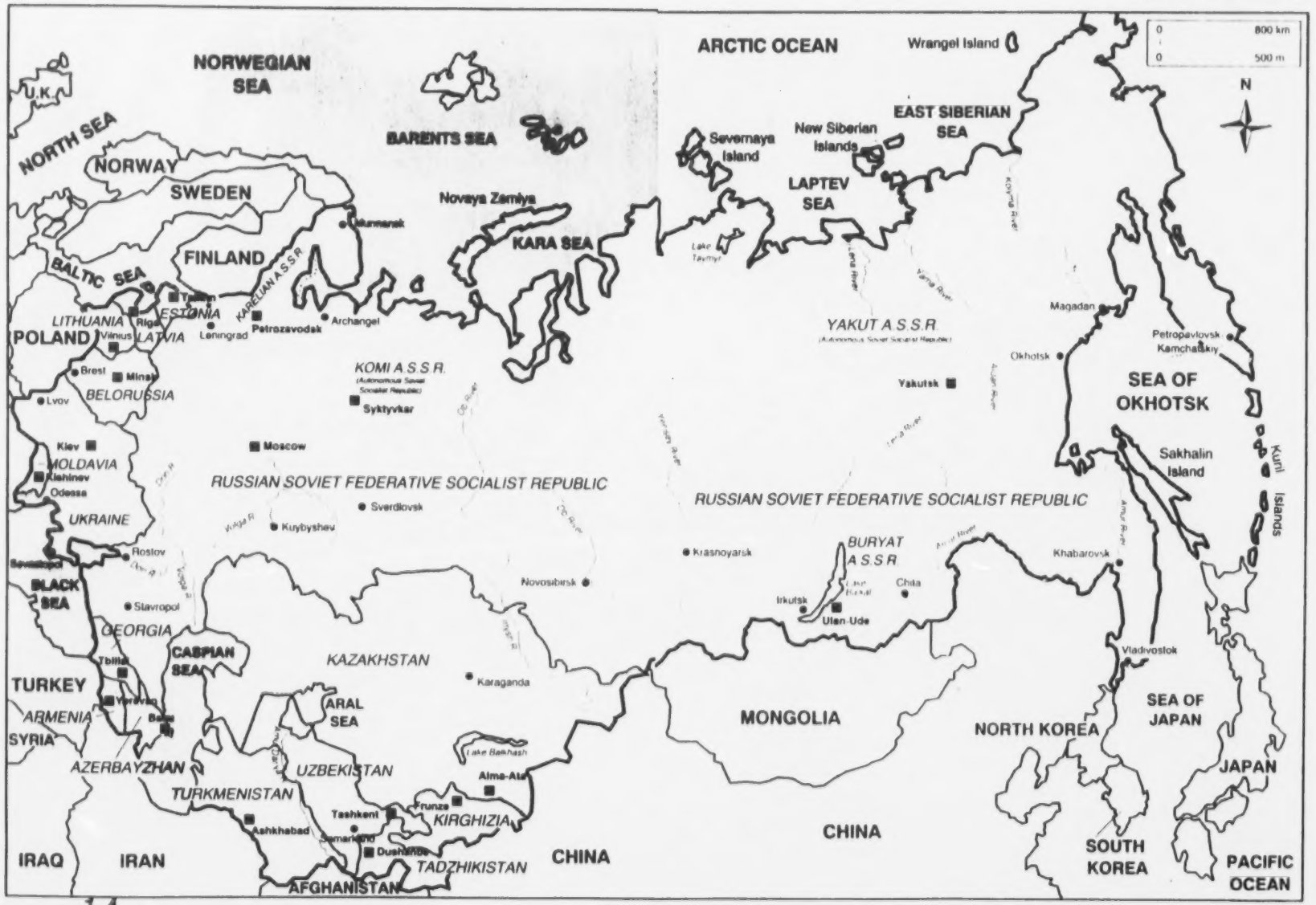
USSR REPUBLICS



1990 Facts On File, Inc

Republics of the Soviet Union

	POPULATION (M=MILLION)	SIZE (SQ. MILES)	INCOME (PER CAPITA)
Armenia	3.3m	11,580	$4,710
Azerbaijan	7.1m	33,582	$3,750
Byelorussia	10.3m	80,288	$5,960
Georgia	5.5m	27,020	$4,410
Kazakhstan	16.7m	1,048,762	$3,720
Kirghizia	4.4m	76,814	$3,030
Moldavia	4.4m	13,464	$3,830
Russia	148m	6,590,950	$5,810
Tajikistan	5.3m	55,198	$2,340
Turkmenistan	3.6m	188,368	$3,370
Ukraine	51.8m	233,144	$4,700
Uzbekistan	20.3m	172,542	$2,750

The Economy of the Soviet Union

World War I caused severe economic hardship and hunger in the Russian Empire. Tired of the war and eager to change the bleak economic situation, many people began to oppose the government. Uprisings against the government in the two largest cities in the empire, St. Petersburg and Moscow, and mounting political pressure, forced Tsar Nicholas II to give up his throne. A provisional government was set up in February 1917, but for the next few months there was political chaos in Russia as many political and ideological forces competed for power. In October 1917, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin took power in the second revolution of the year by rallying support among the desperate population with the promise of "Land, Bread, Peace." He proclaimed Russia a "workers' state" and announced that it would be the first country in the world to be run according to communist principles.

Lenin was guided by the political ideas of Karl Marx, the philosopher who laid out the theoretical foundations of communism. Marx developed his theory during the 19th century, while Europe was undergoing the pains associated with the Industrial Revolution. He believed that capitalism was to blame for society's ills, and predicted that, as the world became more and more industrialized, the size of the working class -- and their misery -- would continue to grow. Eventually, according to Marx, the workers would rise up and overthrow the capitalist ruling class, creating in its place an egalitarian society run by workers.

In the fall of 1991, nearly seventy-five years later, the activities of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union were outlawed and the communist ideology officially abandoned. Communism in the Soviet Union never came close to producing the workers' paradise once promised.

Russia's historic economic problems and early communist policies

Russia, although one of the largest empires in the world, was never as economically advanced as the other imperial powers. The Mongol conquests of the 13th and 14th centuries cut Russia off from the rest of Europe. Isolated from the West, Russia fell behind the progress other societies were making. In 1696, the Russian ruler, Tsar Peter the Great, spent three years in western Europe trying to get technology and information to modernize his nation. He even built a new capital city -- St. Petersburg, on the Baltic Sea -- to get a "Window on the West."[1] Still Russia did not catch up, and lagged behind during the trade and industrial revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Between 1890 and 1914, Russia began to realize economic growth and the beginning of **industrialization**. Throughout this period, most of the economy was still based on agriculture, but for the first time a substantial part of the Russian economy -- about twenty percent -- was industrial. Russia was modernizing fairly well, until the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The war clearly revealed some of the economy's major weaknesses, including bad railroads and roadways and the inability of the industries to produce many of the goods needed for the war effort. It also created hardships -- especially food shortages -- that made life miserable for many peasants.

After the October 1917 revolution, civil war broke out in Russia between Lenin's supporters and those who opposed communism, led by the organizers of the first revolution in February. During the civil war, Lenin set aside the long-term goals of the communist revolution and directed the national economy from Moscow under the policy of "war communism." Lenin said that he was enacting temporary social and economic measures to address the greatest needs in society. Most often he defined the greatest need to be winning the civil war, and so he took steps to divert resources to the military. For example, Lenin took grain from farmers to feed the Red Army. Farmers who resisted were often killed. Lenin's forces did win the civil war, but war communism policies created still more hardships for the peasants.

After the war, Lenin found more obstacles to establishing communism. Communist theorists had expected communism to originate in very industrialized countries, such as Germany or England, because these countries would have a large working class ready to rise up against economic injustice. Industrialized countries would also have the greatest amount of wealth and resources to share. But in Russia, the communist revolution occurred before the country was fully industrialized, so there were not as many major industries to nationalize or as much wealth to share as there would have been in industrialized countries. In addition, there was very little money in

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1. After the revolution in October 1917, Lenin moved the capital to Moscow.

the country. Lenin's government had already confiscated -- and spent -- most of the savings accounts in Russia. As a result, no foreign businesses wanted to invest there. The hardships of World War I and the Russian civil war made all these problems more acute. Lenin decided he needed to stimulate the economy as soon as possible, and rejoin the effort to establish full communism later. He instituted the New Economic Policy (NEP), which allowed some limited free market capitalism. He admitted that the NEP, by returning to limited capitalism, was a compromise. But he felt it was necessary to "take one step back in order to take two steps forward."

The NEP did not last long. Lenin died in 1924. A long power struggle followed his death, but by 1928, Josef Stalin had won control of the government. Stalin wanted to rid the system of capitalism and also to speed up the industrialization process in order to compete with the capitalist world. He took control of the economic system himself and established a **command economy**, a system in which the national government controls all aspects of economic activity and directs the distribution of goods for the whole country. In many ways, Stalin's system was like war communism, with price controls and the national government directing the economy. But there was one very important distinction: war communism was a set of temporary measures, but the command economy became a permanent part of the Soviet economic system. Central planning under Stalin became stricter and more institutionalized. He established the Five-Year Plan, official lists which detailed the amounts and types of goods to be produced in every part of the Soviet Union.[2] Stalin also created a new government agency to oversee and direct the economy.[3]

There were other changes during the Stalin years. The economy became much more industrialized, and military production became a large part of the national economy. Also, the Communist Party began to run individual industrial plants. But Stalin is perhaps best remembered for the economic changes he made under the policy referred to as **forced collectivization**. Stalin forcibly took farms away from peasants and combined them in an effort to create larger, more productive farms and to pool the limited amount of farm equipment in the country. These collective farms were controlled by the state and designed to produce food for workers in the cities, where the major industries were. Forced collectivization did not increase the output of Soviet farms, and it was one of Stalin's more brutal policies: millions of people died during forced collectivization and the repression of dissent.

Modern economy and Gorbachev's reform plan

The system that was created in the USSR by Stalin was radically different from the free market capitalism of the United States and much of the Western world. Free market capitalism means that the prices are set by the market, not the government, based on the supply of and demand for goods. The government is not as pervasive an actor in the economic process in the United States as it was in the Soviet Union. In capitalist countries, people produce because if they are more productive (either by working harder or by being innovative), then they will make more money and be able to buy more private property -- all of which increases the chances of "moving up in the world."

During the late 1970s, a recession hit the world economy. In many Western capitalist countries there was high inflation and unemployment, but in just a few years capitalist economies rebounded and strengthened. At that time, however, the Soviet economy continued to sputter. It became clear to many in the Soviet Union that the Soviet economy was in serious trouble.

Two things sparked an economic reform effort in the Soviet Union. First, the rate of economic growth -- which had been declining fairly steadily since the 1930s -- had fallen sharply in the 1970s, to a growth rate of almost zero. The second factor was increased military production in the United States in the early 1980s. The Soviets perceived the development of new weapons in the United States as an increase in the U.S. military threat because many of the new weapons were, for the first time, high-technology weapons which the Soviets were unable to build. The Soviets had, in fact, been falling behind the West in the area of high technology for years, but it now became clear to the Soviet military that unless Soviet industry modernized and began to develop high technology, the Soviets would not be able to keep up with the advanced weapons being built in the West. Because of these security concerns, Soviet military leaders became early advocates of economic reform.

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2. The targets set in these plans were rarely met, but the Soviets drafted new ones every five years into the 1980s.

3. This agency is called *Gosplan*. The name is a combination of the Russian words for "state" and "planning."

When **Mikhail Gorbachev** became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, he realized that the system he inherited was not working. But since no country had ever changed from a command, communist economy, there was no reform plan that he could follow. In 1987, he instituted a policy called *perestroika* (restructuring), which in the beginning was an attempt to eliminate corruption and make the system more efficient and streamlined in an effort to stimulate the economy. In the next few years, as economic problems intensified, there was a debate over what form the reform efforts should take. Gorbachev wanted to improve the economy, but not adopt Western-style capitalism. Like many Soviet citizens and conservatives in the government, Gorbachev felt the communist philosophy was valid and that Western capitalism exploited workers and was full of greed and excess. But he was also getting political pressure on the other side from radical reformers in the government who wanted rapid, widespread change.

Over the next few years *perestroika* went beyond merely encouraging efficiency to actually reforming the economic system. But Gorbachev's plan clearly followed the middle ground between the two opposing political groups: the government made some gradual, limited free-market reforms, such as lifting some price controls and allowing some for-profit farming. Gorbachev called this the **mixed economy** approach, keeping most parts of communism and adding a very few parts of capitalism. He went to foreign countries to ask for outside investment to create business opportunities in order to keep the reform process moving. In the West, his plan met with mixed reviews. Some people described his plan as trying to gradually change from a system where everybody drives on the right side of the road to one where they drive on the left side; in short, they said, you either do it all at once or not at all. In spite of *perestroika*, and some Western financial aid, the economic problems only worsened, especially after 1989. By 1991, the economic situation in the USSR was much worse than when Gorbachev had taken power six years earlier.

Present economic problems

The hard-line communists who tried to take power in August 1991 were hoping to put the brakes on the process of economic change. Their quick defeat, however, only strengthened the hand of the reformers. In the closing months of 1991, many of the remaining institutions behind the old command economy were stripped of their power. By the beginning of 1992, each of the republics was struggling to cope with the demands of the free market economic system. Average people in the former Soviet Union, though, recognize that the economy will get worse before it gets better. Among the problems to be overcome are:

--The old Soviet currency, the ruble, cannot be exchanged for any foreign currency. This makes it difficult to buy goods in the West, since anyone who accepts rubles cannot then convert them into dollars, yen, pounds, or other foreign currencies. To get around this, some trade arrangements are essentially barter agreements. This makes trade very cumbersome. Some of the new republics have announced plans to print their own money, but in the long run a sound currency must rest on economic stability.

--The ruble is not worth much at home either. Because the Soviet government printed so many rubles after January 1991, there is too much money in a system with too few goods. This has caused the price of goods to skyrocket. In turn, people in the former Soviet Union have lost confidence in the ruble's value.

--Gorbachev's reform effort left price controls on most goods. These controls had kept prices artificially low for years. On January 2, 1992, however, the controls in Russia were lifted and prices soared. Other republics quickly followed their huge neighbor, fearing that producers would take their goods to Russia to take advantage of the higher prices. Meanwhile, consumers throughout the former Soviet Union are finding that salary increases are not keeping pace with rising prices.

--There is a shortage of basic goods and foodstuffs, resulting in long lines for many items. Even when there are enough goods to go around, the distribution system is so bad that many items never make it to market.

--Most factories are old and use outdated equipment. As a result, productivity is low and the products made are of poor quality. Compounding this problem is that very often these factories are the "wrong kind": for decades they produced only what the government wanted, not the most useful products or ones in the greatest demand. They were also built without consideration of profitability, and so are often very expensive to operate, using the most costly energy systems, for example. In a free market economy, where industries are forced to "sink or swim," many of these plants may not be

able to compete with those in other countries and will be shut down.

--Everyone in the Soviet Union was guaranteed a job according to the Soviet Constitution. Now that plants face the prospect of streamlining or even closing, millions of workers are expected to face unemployment for the first time.

--In the Soviet Union, many of the basic institutions of capitalism did not exist, including private property, a strong banking system, and a stock market. These are necessary in order to develop capitalism at home and encourage investment from abroad.

In the end, it may not be structural problems within the economy but popular attitudes that are the biggest obstacles to reform. In a public opinion poll completed a month before the August coup, forty-six percent of Soviets opposed the creation of free market capitalism in the Soviet Union. Since the coup's failure, more people have begun to support the creation of a free market system; however, even if public opinion fully supports the transition to capitalism, some wonder if it will work in the former Soviet Union. There is a feeling that after seventy years under a communist system, people no longer know how to work hard. An old Soviet joke is, "It's a great system: they pretend to pay us and we pretend to work." Others think that the problem is not that people cannot work hard, but just that the old system did not allow for personal advancement. Of course, right now, many people in the former Soviet Union are understandably concerned more about the immediate problem of survival than the prospect of long-term structural change.

Questions for Consideration

It has been said that communism in the Soviet Union was doomed from the start. Considering what you know about the communist system, do you agree or disagree? Why?

Lenin said it would take some time to move from capitalism to communism. Although no country has done it before, we can assume that it will take time to change from communism to capitalism, too. Should the process be accelerated to try to change the economy as fast as possible? Or should a more gradual change be tried? What might either of these approaches mean for the average citizen?

What would you like to see happen? What role can or should the United States play in this issue?

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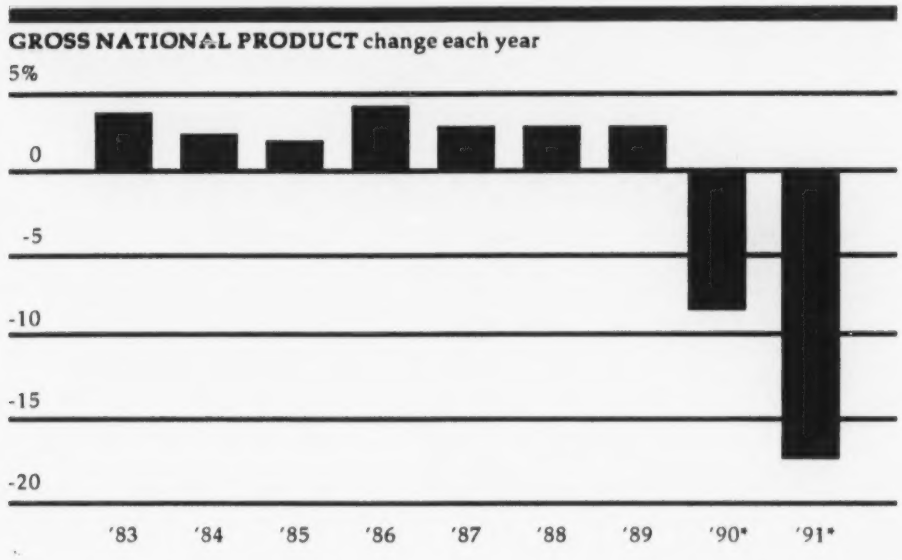
A Portrait of the Soviet Economy



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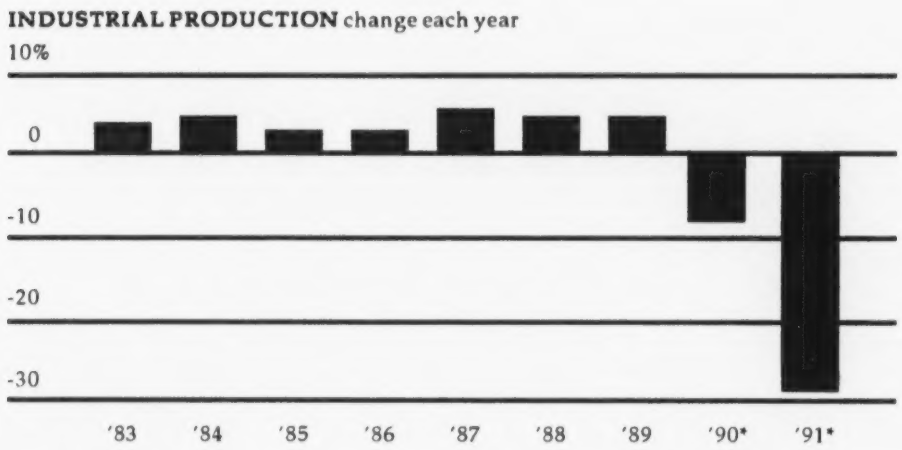

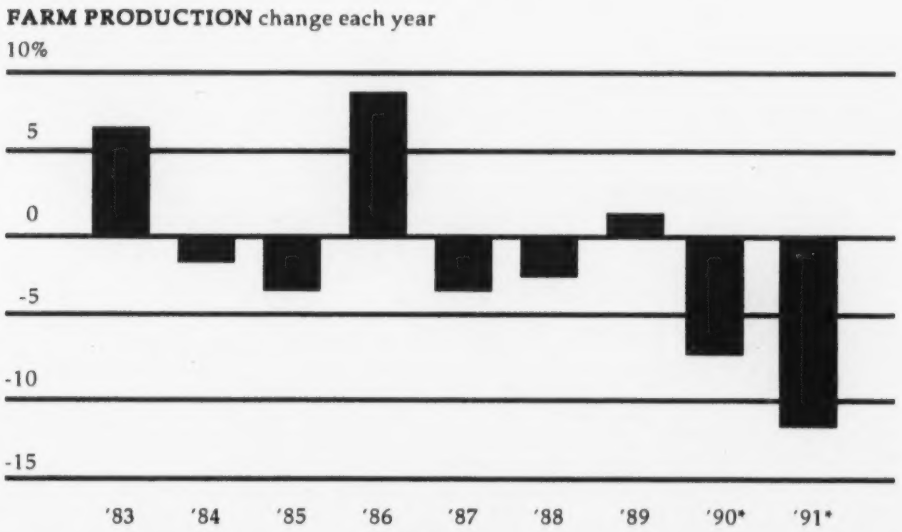

Source: *The New York Times*, July 17, 1991

Nuclear Weapons in the Former Soviet Union

During the era of **Mikhail Gorbachev**, military tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union dramatically eased. Events of the past few months, however, have raised a new set of concerns about the future of the Soviet military. In August 1991, hard-line communists attempted to wrest power from the Gorbachev government. Although their coup was defeated in three days, some U.S. experts are still shaken by what might have been. Even the official collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 -- hailed by President George Bush as "a victory for democracy and freedom" -- contains many potential dangers. The Soviet Union, after all, had the largest armed forces in the world and over 30,000 nuclear warheads. Neither the conventional forces nor the nuclear weapons disappeared with the demise of the Soviet Union. Instead, instability in the former Soviet Union has kept the Soviet military threat alive even though the Soviet Union no longer exists.

Control of nuclear weapons in the republics

Nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union can be roughly divided into two groups: **strategic**, which are missiles capable of reaching the United States, and **tactical**, such as short-range missiles and battlefield nuclear weapons.

Strategic weapons: The Soviet strategic nuclear weapons were based in only four republics: Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Byelorussia (now called Belarus).[1] The majority of these long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), nearly eighty-five percent, are in the Russian Republic. That still leaves a sizeable force in each of the other three republics -- roughly 1,200 nuclear warheads are in Ukraine, one thousand are in Kazakhstan and another hundred are in Byelorussia. Although some experts have speculated that each republic might take control of the weapons based on its soil and become instant nuclear nations, this has so far failed to occur for two reasons.

First, while each republic would certainly be able to keep these missiles in their silos and prevent them from being moved anywhere, there is almost no chance that the republics will ever be able to launch these missiles. These strategic missiles are not controlled on-site; they can be launched only after receiving authorized codes from the central command authority. When Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as president of the Soviet Union in December 1991, he turned these codes over to Russian President **Boris Yeltsin**. In addition, each weapon has several built-in security systems designed to protect them from tampering and unauthorized use.

Second, these republics have little incentive to become nuclear powers. The Ukraine has pushed to be "nuclear free" since the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. And in Kazakhstan, long the home of one of the Soviet Union's two major nuclear testing sites, there was a massive protest movement against continued testing. One of the first acts of the president of the republic after the coup was to suspend testing in Kazakhstan.

But even assuming that no republic other than Russia can launch nuclear missiles, these weapons have nonetheless become a source of increased tension between Russia and the other republics. Many non-Russians are uneasy with the notion of Russia being the only nuclear power in the region, especially after Russian officials suggested that their republic's borders with Ukraine and Kazakhstan should be reconsidered. Yeltsin later reassured his neighbors that borders would not be revised. He also agreed that the Byelorussian capital of Minsk serve as the administrative headquarters for meetings of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia's softened position persuaded the leaders of Ukraine and Byelorussia to pledge to turn over control of nuclear weapons on their territory to Russia. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, however, did not sign the agreement. Nazarbayev felt offended that he was not invited to join the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Byelorussia at the founding meeting of the CIS. He may have also been wary of given up a potential "bargaining chip" in future negotiations with the Russian Republic. Ultimately, though, experts expect Kazakhstan to follow Ukraine and Byelorussia in granting Russia control of its nuclear arsenal. One likely compromise is to destroy, rather than transfer, the strategic missiles currently outside of Russia.

Tactical weapons: Tactical nuclear weapons have also been a major concern of U.S. policymakers. In fact, some suggest that growing anxiety about the Soviet

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1. The missiles in Russia and Ukraine are both mobile-launched and based in hardened (permanent) silos. The only missiles in Byelorussia are on mobile launchers; the ones in Kazakhstan are all in hardened silos.

Union's ability to maintain control over its more than 12,000 tactical nuclear weapons led President Bush in September 1991 to announce dramatic cuts in U.S. tactical nuclear forces -- with the hope that the Soviets would make similar cuts. There are several reasons why experts have been concerned about these weapons. Tactical weapons may not have as many security safeguards as do strategic weapons. In addition, until recently these weapons were not centrally located; in fact, they were located in hundreds of storage sites scattered throughout the Soviet Union. The Soviets began to change this policy in 1990. In January of that year, Soviet troops were sent to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, to put down demonstrations led by secessionist forces. After the incident, the military concluded that having nuclear weapons in "less stable" republics could cause problems in the future, and began transferring some tactical weapons into Russia. Today, Russian officials maintain that all of the tactical nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union are stored within the Russian Republic. Still, some experts question Russia's claim.

Nuclear proliferation

Another potential threat growing out of the Soviet Union's collapse is **nuclear proliferation**, the spread of nuclear weapons and technology into other nations. Several Third World nations, most notably Iraq under Saddam Hussein, have been trying to establish a nuclear weapons program for many years. Because of the economic crisis in the former Soviet Union, many research institutes and individual scientists may be willing to sell nuclear secrets in exchange for foreign currency. Even if actual nuclear weapons are not for sale, other countries may still be able to buy sensitive technology, nuclear material, and expertise.

U.S. experts estimate that up to 2,000 scientists in the former Soviet Union have the technical knowledge to make nuclear arms. Until recently, these scientists worked in ten secret cities scattered throughout the Soviet Union designing and producing nuclear weapons. Under the old system, they were considered a well-paid and privileged elite within the Soviet defense industry. Now, while their homeland is suffering economic chaos, they are receiving tempting job offers from Iraq, Libya and elsewhere.

Nuclear command and control and the risk of nuclear war during the coup

The August 1991 coup focused attention on another dimension of the Soviet nuclear arsenal: the system of command and control over nuclear weapons. Although most experts believe that during the three days of confusion the risk of nuclear war was low, the August coup left Americans worried about what might happen in the event of a future crisis.

In the United States, the president always travels with what is called the "football" -- a briefcase containing the launch codes for nuclear weapons. If it is necessary, the president will be able to launch U.S. nuclear weapons from wherever he is. As long as the president is alive and able to communicate with the armed forces during a crisis, only he can authorize the use of nuclear weapons through the appropriate chain of command. But the U.S. system has backup plans, which allow other senior government and military officials to launch nuclear weapons, in the event that the president dies or is cut off from communication during a war. This dispersal of nuclear control is designed to prevent U.S. defenses from being rendered useless in the event of an attack against the president.

The Soviets had a similar system; but their system was designed to minimize the risk of unauthorized nuclear launch, and so launch control was even more centralized. There were two "footballs" in the Soviet system, one held by the president (representing civilian authority) and the other by the defense minister (for the armed forces). To begin the launch sequence, both individuals had to separately generate secret codes, which would then be transmitted to a central command center. Many in the United States worried that during the August coup one of the plotters, then defense minister Dmitri Yazov, may have taken control of Mikhail Gorbachev's briefcase with nuclear codes, giving him both sets of codes and, one would think, total control of the Soviet's nuclear weapons. But in reality, because of a series of safeguards in the Soviet system, merely possessing the codes did not give one the authority or ability to order a nuclear launch.

First, Soviet military officials said that there are safeguards on the "footballs" that require some kind of unique personal identification, such as a palm print, voice print or retina scan. This would have meant that only Gorbachev himself could have activated the codes in his briefcase and carried out his part of the process. Press reports in the Soviet Union suggested that military officers loyal to Gorbachev took even further precautions against the coup leaders using the president's codes. These military officers may have devised a way to sabotage Gorbachev's briefcase in the event that the coup leaders physically forced Gorbachev to use his personal identification.

Second, even if the coup leaders could have used Gorbachev's codes, they still might not have been able to launch nuclear weapons. There are actually several series of codes that have to be given -- one set to put the missiles on higher alert, another to launch them, etc. At each level humans, not computers, are responsible for implementing these commands. Since the coup did not have the backing of the entire military, it is very likely that many commanders would have disregarded any launch orders they received. The actions of several high ranking military commanders in the Soviet Union during the coup seem to bear this out. Acting on their own, some commanders took steps to reduce military tensions during the coup. For example, the commander of the Soviet strategic missile forces ordered mobile nuclear missiles back to their bases, and a senior air force commander sent bombers with nuclear weapons back to their hangars.

In the final analysis, taking the codes away from Gorbachev, and so disrupting the process, would have actually made it more difficult, not less, for the coup leadership to use nuclear weapons. In fact, some have speculated that this action would have made it impossible to launch weapons under any circumstances, including in response to a foreign attack. Now that Boris Yeltsin is in possession of the nuclear codes, experts believe that Russia will retain most aspects of the old Soviet command and control structure.

Questions for Consideration

The question of nuclear control is certainly an important issue in the former Soviet Union. Who do you think should control nuclear weapons based outside of Russia?

How much of a threat do you think nuclear proliferation poses to the United States? How can this threat be minimized?

What role can or should the United States have in this issue?

WELL, I GUESS WITH RECENT EVENTS IN THE U.S.S.R. WE CAN ALL SLEEP A LITTLE EASIER.
A HARDLINE COUP FOILED, THE RULE OF LAW RESTORED...
COMMUNISM DEFEATED, THE K.G.B. NUETRALIZED...
FREEDOM FOR THE BALTICS, REFORMS GOING FORWARD...
27,000 NUCLEAR WARHEADS UNDER LORD-KNOWS-WHOSE CONTROL...

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Option 1

STRENGTHEN THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT REPUBLICS

The remarkable political changes that brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union have made it possible for each of the newly independent republics to take control of their own future. The United States should actively support this transition. Near the end of World War I, President Woodrow Wilson articulated his vision of a world where every nation could "live its own life and determine its own institutions." This principle of self-determination, which was at the heart of our own Declaration of Independence, should guide our policy toward the former Soviet Union.

The newly independent republics have the right to determine their own future, and we must treat them as equal members of the international community. This is the only way to guarantee a fundamental and lasting change in the former Soviet Union and a permanent end to the old empire. Unfortunately, Russia is unpredictable. As inheritor to the power of the tsars and the communists, Russia has a long history of authoritarianism and military might. Today's Russia also controls the Soviet nuclear arsenal and much of the huge Soviet army.

To ensure that Russia becomes a responsible member within the family of nations, the United States should take an active role in helping each of the newly independent republics get on its feet. The United States should insist that in relations between Russia and its neighbors there are no second-class states. The Commonwealth of Independent States established in December 1991 may be an appropriate vehicle to promote peaceful and equitable relations among the republics of the former Soviet Union. Whatever the structure, U.S. policy should encourage mutual respect and equality. This course of action is the only way to remain true to our own founding principles and promote the development of peaceful democracy in the former Soviet Union.

1

What should we do?

- We should offer Russia incentives to reach security agreements with other republics and transform its huge army into a much smaller force designed for the defense of Russian territory.
- We should help promote the Commonwealth of Independent States as a force for peaceful and equitable relations among all member states.
- We should pressure Russia to resolve its disputes peacefully with other republics within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States.
- We should help each republic enter the world economic market by providing economic aid and assistance.
- We should pursue trade with the governments of newly independent republics, as well as arms control agreements, as needed.
- We should encourage world financial organizations, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to accept all newly independent republics as full members in order to make loans to help their economies.
- We should help each newly independent republic become a part of international organizations, beginning with sponsoring their membership in the United Nations.

2

How do changes in the former Soviet Union affect our national interests?

The Soviet Union posed a great threat to our national security for forty-five years. Without restraints, Russia could step into the shoes of the old Soviet Union and again threaten the United States.

3

What lessons should we learn from history?

Throughout the 20th century, the United States has underestimated the power of nationalism. As we have seen in every part of the globe -- from the Middle East to Vietnam to Eastern Europe -- people will fight fiercely for self-determination. This has been the cause of the breakup of empires during the last one hundred years. The Soviet Union, the world's last empire, has gone the way of its predecessors, and we should do all we can to support, not hinder, national aspirations.

WHAT UNDERLYING BELIEFS IS OPTION 1 BASED UPON?

- Our Declaration of Independence asserts that it may "become necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's god entitle them." These are our founding principles, and they must guide our actions.
- Empires should not be tolerated because they impose the rule of one people over another. Relations among nations must be based on fairness and respect for sovereignty.

PROS

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

1. The creation of secure, prosperous countries around the Russian Republic will contain Russia's expansionist tendencies, and reduce tensions among the neighbors of the former Soviet Union.

2. Treating the new republics equally will allow each to develop fully its unique economic strengths and create a market economy.

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3. The United States can best exert influence over the republics of the former Soviet Union by maintaining an even-handed policy toward all of them.

CONS

OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

1. There is virtually no tradition of democracy in the region, and by encouraging republics to disregard the democratic reform movement based in Russia, we may make democracy harder to achieve.

2. Without a strong Russia to keep them in check, individual republics may build up threatening military forces and even try to gain nuclear weapons.

3. The new republics will be too busy fighting over border and ethnic disputes to develop economically or effectively cooperate with one another.

4. It is not our responsibility to become involved in the affairs of the former Soviet Union.

5. Giving significant economic aid to all of the newly independent republics will cost us too much money at a time when our limited resources can be better used at home.

6. If we carry the principle of self-determination to its natural conclusion, we will have to support groups within republics that seek self-determination. Since there are one hundred nationalities in the former Soviet Union, this policy may divide the region still further and create greater chaos.

Option 2 SUPPORT A STABLE RUSSIA

The collapse of the Soviet Union marks a victory for U.S. foreign policy while raising new worries for Americans. Our old Cold War enemy may be gone but many of the most dangerous elements of that conflict – including more than 30,000 nuclear warheads – are still present. In the current atmosphere of uncertainty, the United States must act as the anchor of international order. That means making the stability of Russia our top priority in the former Soviet Union.

The Russian Republic alone constitutes the biggest country in the world and possesses enormous natural resources. Equally important, Russia has inherited the great bulk of the Soviet Union's military might. In this perilous age, the world would become a far more dangerous place if substantial portions of the Soviet armed forces end up under the control of new, unpredictable states. Ultimately, only Russia has the power to maintain stability in this potentially explosive region, just as the tsars kept order among dozens of small peoples for over three centuries. Attempts to bring the republics together within a new political structure, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, may help keep a lid on conflict, but in the end Russia will decide the fate of any new institution.

Russia has indicated that it will not be held back by its neighbors. The new government under Boris Yeltsin has already moved boldly ahead to implement economic reforms and create democratic institutions. In foreign policy, Russia has broken sharply with the Soviet past. At the same time, even Russian leaders acknowledge that their huge country is walking a tightrope between an open, free market democracy and a closed, authoritarian society. The United States must play an active role in guiding Russia toward a system much like our own. After struggling so long to defeat our Cold War enemy, we would now be foolish not to lend a hand to our new-found friend.

1

What should we do?

- We should give economic aid to Russia special priority.
- We should pressure the republics with strategic nuclear weapons on their territory (Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine) to turn them over to Russian control as soon as possible.
- We should pressure the other republics not to lay claim to the armed forces of the former Soviet Union stationed on their territory.
- We should accept Russia as the legal successor to the Soviet Union in terms of arms control negotiations and trade agreements.
- We should see that Russia occupies a prominent position in international institutions, such as the United Nations, and encourage our allies in Europe, Japan, and elsewhere to cooperate with Russia.
- We should encourage world financial institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to accept Russia as a full member in order to make loans to help the Russian economy.

2

How do changes in the former Soviet Union affect our national interests?

Chaos in the former Soviet Union poses a serious risk to U.S. security. The presence of more than 30,000 nuclear warheads is unsettling, especially considering that countries in the Middle East and elsewhere are looking to acquire nuclear capability. The transfer of nuclear materials, technology, or expertise dramatically increases the risk of nuclear war. In addition, political instability, combined with economic crisis, is perilous: it may lead to the kind of nationalist wars that have plagued Europe for centuries -- and that dragged the United States into war twice this century.

3

What lessons should we learn from history?

Sudden shifts in political power cause chaos. The collapse of tsarist authority in Russia during World War I resulted in the spread of anarchy, bloodshed, and misery throughout the old empire. Recently, Yugoslavia has been beset by the same type of violence that occurs during times of rapid change. Since World War II, the United States has played an important role in maintainting international order by working to prevent change from taking place too rapidly.

WHAT UNDERLYING BELIEFS IS OPTION 2 BASED UPON?

- Instability threatens the world economy, can plunge the world into war, and makes democratic reform impossible.
- As the only remaining superpower, the United States has a responsibility to keep the world stable and peaceful. Therefore, we should help Russia become a stable, responsible and democratic member of the world community.

PROS

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

1. Arms control treaties between the United States and the Soviet Union form a vital element of U.S. foreign policy. Without a stable Russia to serve as the successor state to the Soviet Union, decades of arms control progress will be lost.

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2. Concentrating U.S. resources on building a prosperous free market economy in Russia will open up a huge new market for U.S. businesses and fuel an economic revival throughout the former Soviet Union.

3. Some of the governments of the non-Russian republics have shown a tendency toward building up large armies and disregarding the human rights of ethnic minorities. A stable Russia would be a vital force for moderation, democracy, and order in the region.

CONS

OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

1. This option ignores the values that the United States is committed to, such as self-determination and fair play. We should not be in the business of helping Russia perpetuate centuries of domination over the region of the former Soviet Union.

2. Focusing our attention on Russia will offend the other republics. Many of these new states, particularly Ukraine and Kazakhstan, will undoubtedly emerge as important regional powers.

3. Overly generous U.S. support will encourage Russian nationalists to again assert Russian power over the other republics. This would be a threat to world peace.

4. Russia cannot be reliably depended upon to maintain regional stability in view of the enormous economic and political problems confronting the Russian Republic.

5. It is not our responsibility to become involved in the affairs of the former Soviet Union.

6. If we decide to give a significant amount of aid to Russia, then this option will cost us too much money at a time when our limited resources can be better used at home.

Option 3 MIND OUR OWN BUSINESS

For forty-five years after World War II, we stationed troops in Europe, sent our forces around the world, and spent hundreds of billions of dollars to counter the Soviet threat. But today the Soviet Union is no more. In the meantime, Europe has grown stronger and is now able to provide for its own defense. Of course we would like to see more changes and greater reform in the republics of the former Soviet Union, but political and economic changes must be made by leaders there, not by us. We should instead take this opportunity to focus our attention on our own pressing domestic concerns, removing ourselves from what are essentially European concerns to concentrate our foreign policy on the defense of the Americas.

The United States should serve as a role model for the world to follow -- a model of stability, democracy and economic prosperity. But recently, major domestic concerns -- education, drugs, crime, the deficit, the environment -- have gone unaddressed. If we want other nations to continue to use our society as their model and to look to the United States for moral leadership, then we must take this opportunity to remedy these domestic problems.

We cannot completely isolate ourselves from the world around us, but it is time to reexamine our role in the world. The people of the new republics know best what they must do to reform their own societies. Recent events clearly show that they are well on their way toward reform. Instead of worrying about their problems, we need to focus our attention on issues in our own backyard: U.S. domestic concerns and relations with our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. This rare time of peace gives us an opportunity to put our own house in order, and to remain a society worthy of emulation.

1

What should we do?

- We should offer no grants of economic aid to the region -- except emergency humanitarian aid to see the people through the winter.
- We should work for businesslike trade relations and arms control agreements with the leaders of the republics of the former Soviet Union.
- We should withdraw our forces from Europe on an orderly but prompt timetable.
- We should redirect our resources to reduce our deficit, address our domestic needs, and strengthen the U.S. economy.
- We should direct our attention in defense and military policy only to issues in the Western Hemisphere.
- We should encourage the United Nations to take on a more active role to insure stability in the world while the United States and Russia focus on concerns closer to home.

2

How do changes in the former Soviet Union affect our national interests?

We have defined our national interests too broadly for the last forty-five years, treating virtually every crisis in the world like a matter of vital importance for the United States. The consequence has been many billions of dollars spent abroad to try to project U.S. influence to every corner of the world. Today, we can return to a set of national interests that makes more sense: protecting our citizens, territory and resources in this hemisphere from attack, and promoting the general welfare and a healthy economy at home.

3

What lessons should we learn from history?

The founders of the United States believed that our nation's interests lay close to home and urged us to be careful when getting involved in international affairs, especially those of Europe. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson warned that the United States could easily become involved in a war we did not make and which did not directly involve our interests. The United States followed this advice for most of its history. We traditionally did not enter conflicts -- even the two world wars -- until it was clear that our interests were threatened. The Vietnam War is a good example of what happens when we become involved in a conflict that does not directly affect our national interests: we became locked in a long and costly war while domestic problems were neglected.

WHAT UNDERLYING BELIEFS IS OPTION 3 BASED UPON?

- The greatest problems facing the United States today are at home: our weak economy, our national debt, decaying cities, crime, education, drugs, the environment, unemployment, homelessness, and other long-neglected domestic problems. Solving domestic problems and building an economically strong country must be our national priority.
- Since the Monroe Doctrine, the United States has had a special relationship with other nations in the Americas, which we have ignored since World War II to focus on the Soviet Union.
- We must respect the right of other peoples to work out their own problems.

PROS

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

1. The money we are currently spending on keeping a military presence in Europe -- and any money we may spend in the future to aid the republics of the former Soviet Union -- can be better spent on important domestic needs.

2. Choosing sides in the politics of the former Soviet Union is a dangerous business. Last year we ignored Boris Yeltsin in our effort to show support for Mikhail Gorbachev. Today that plan seems unwise. Direct involvement in such affairs can only cause the United States trouble in the future.

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3. The United States has always been a beacon for the rest of the world to follow. We can win more converts to democracy by setting an example of how democracy and free market capitalism can work than by using force.

4. Committing ourselves to making change in the former Soviet Union, and keeping troops so close to possible chaos there, is dangerous. We may find ourselves involved in a civil war or being called upon to prop up an authoritarian government.

CONS

OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

1. The world is not the same as it was before World War II. It is too risky for the United States to end its involvement in the affairs of the former Soviet Union and Europe, because the outcome of crises there will directly affect us, and may again drag us into war in Europe.

2. We cannot improve our economy by shutting out the rest of the world. In this time of global integration, the success of our economy depends on the success of other countries and the creation of new global markets. We cannot afford to sit idly by, as a spectator to economic changes in the former Soviet Union.

3. The United States is the only remaining superpower, and is the only nation that can keep global peace. We must not abdicate this important role.

Glossary

Diplomatic recognition: A government's acceptance of another government's right to represent its people. Nations use diplomatic recognition to express approval or disapproval of a new government. Recently, the United States granted diplomatic recognition to newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union.

European Community (EC): An association of twelve Western European nations. The EC was originally an economic organization called the Common Market or European Economic Community. Today, however, the EC is a political union as well. By the end of 1992, members of the EC plan to eliminate all trade barriers and customs checks, and use one European passport. The intent is to create a closer union among the peoples of Europe.

Mikhail Gorbachev: The Soviet leader who held power from 1985 to 1991. Gorbachev launched a series of reforms known as *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) to improve Soviet society. In foreign affairs, he moved toward ending the Cold War with the United States.

National interest: A combination of the security, economic, and ideological concerns of a nation. Just as people act out of self-interest, nations also pursue policies that seek benefits or advantages. Because the U.S. national interest is a combination of factors, Americans have different ideas about its proper definition.

National security: A nation's concerns over ensuring its survival. The United States has built the most powerful military force in the world to protect our national security. Besides military threats, however, many Americans also consider issues like the economy, education, crime, and drugs as national security concerns.

Nuclear proliferation: The spread of nuclear weapons around the world. Since the United States first exploded an atomic bomb in 1945, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and China have become nuclear powers. Experts believe that several other nations also possess nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, a wider circle of countries, including Iraq under Saddam Hussein, have developed advanced nuclear programs.

Self-determination: The right of a people to control its political destiny. In offering his proposal for peace during World War I, President Woodrow Wilson was guided by the principle of self-determination. His plan sought to protect every nation that "wishes to live its own life" and "determine its own institutions."

Strategic and tactical nuclear weapons: The two main categories of nuclear arms. U.S. strategic weapons consist of long-range missiles designed to be launched against the Soviet Union. In contrast, tactical weapons are intended for short-range strikes and battlefield use.

Tsar: The title of the monarch that ruled Russia from 1533 to 1917. "Tsar" is the Russian word for "caesar." Under the tsars, Russia expanded from an isolated state based around Moscow to become a vast empire.

United Nations Security Council: Established as an organ of the UN to resolve international conflicts. Of the fifteen nations that make up the Security Council, five are permanent members. These countries -- the United States, Russia (formerly the Soviet Union), China, Great Britain, and France -- each have the power to veto important decisions of the council.

World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF): Created at the end of World War II to help wartorn countries rebuild and promote economic growth throughout the world. As part of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF today primarily loan money to less developed countries.

Boris Yeltsin: The democratically elected president of the Russian Republic. Yeltsin was appointed by Gorbachev to head the Moscow city government, but later criticized the Soviet leader and quit the Communist Party. During the August 1991 coup, he rallied democratic forces to oppose the hard-line communists who organized the coup.

FIVE-DAY LESSON PLAN

DAY ONE

Thinking about changes in U.S.-Soviet relations (20-25 minutes)

Objective: This introductory brainstorming activity highlights the changes that have taken place in U.S.-Soviet relations during the Gorbachev era, drawing particular attention to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the closing months of 1991.

1. Read *President Bush Addresses the Nation.* (The first four paragraphs contain the essence of the president's message.) Ask students to explain what Bush meant by proclaiming "a victory for the moral force of our values" (third paragraph). Which values were at stake during the Cold War? Ask students to recall how U.S.-Soviet relations changed after Gorbachev came to power in 1985. Did the world become a better place during the Gorbachev era? Now that Gorbachev and the Soviet Union are gone, what are some of the concerns and opportunities facing the United States? List student responses on the chalkboard.

Putting U.S. options in perspective (20-25 minutes)

Objective: This small-group exercise helps students link current concerns and opportunities in U.S. relations with the former Soviet Union to broader policy options.

1. Divide the class into groups of four students. Distribute the handout entitled *Options in Brief* and the glossary. Instruct the groups to match up each of the concerns and opportunities listed on the chalkboard with the option most likely to address the issue. (For example, concern over nuclear arms would most likely be addressed by Option Two. At the same time, an opportunity to cut defense spending would be associated most closely with Option Three.) One member of each group will be expected to report on the group consensus at the end of the period.

Homework: Distribute the Student Text, as well as the study guide, at the end of Day One. Students should read the introduction *(Three Options: A Framework for Discussion)*, three background articles, and complete the study guide.

DAY TWO

Fleshing out the options (15 minutes)

Objective: This discussion clarifies the link between policy options and underlying beliefs.

1. Call on students to offer reasons for supporting each of the options. Point out that reasons can be based on a variety of considerations: history, beliefs, economics, national security, etc. Ask students to identify reasons they extracted from the background articles. Collect the study guide.

2. *Optional:* Inform students that they are about to a variety of beliefs about the U.S. role in the world. After reading each statement from *Exploring Underlying Beliefs*, ask students to identify the option most closely connected with the belief.

Role playing the three options: organization and preparation (30 minutes)

Objective: This simulation calls on students to play the role of advocate for one of the three options. In preparing for their roles, students analyze their assigned option.

1. Divide the class into six groups (three groups in smaller classes) of three to four students. Assign an option to each group. (In classes with six groups, two groups will focus on one option.) Explain that each group will play the role of a presidential adviser advocating an option. Note that the options are contained in the Student Text. Within each group, students will assume a specific role. (For groups of three students, suggest that the role of spokesperson and secretary of state be combined. See *Advising the President.*)

2. Distribute the *Considering Your Option* and *Advising the President* handouts to each student. Inform students that each group will be called upon the following day to present the case for its assigned option. (In more advanced classes, suggest that students weave their answers from *Considering Your Option* into a three to five minute presentation. In other classes, allow students to read their group responses directly from the handout. Students should be allowed to use their notes during the presentations.) Note that students should review the background articles to develop their presentations.

Homework: Students should complete *Considering Your Option*. Remind students that they should answer the questions from the perspective of their assigned roles.

DAY THREE

Role playing the three options: presentations of the options (45 minutes)

Objective: This part of the simulation requires students to organize their ideas into a persuasive presentation.

1. Instruct groups to organize their presentations. Remind the spokespersons that they are expected to articulate the beliefs underlying their option. The spokespersons also have the responsibility of organizing the responses of each group member into a coherent and persuasive presentation.

2. Call on group spokespersons to make presentations supporting their options. Remind the spokespersons that they may use notes, but should try to speak clearly and convincingly. Play the role of President in prodding the spokespersons to explain the distinctive elements of their options. Each presentation should not exceed five minutes.

Homework: Students should write down two opposing arguments directed against each of the other options. Remind students that they should maintain the perspective of their assigned role.

DAY FOUR

Role playing the three options: debate and discussion (20-30 minutes)

Objective: This part of the simulation exposes students to different interpretations of the options.

1. Instruct groups to organize their presentations. Remind the spokespersons that they can present only four opposing arguments about each of the other options (see *Advising the President,* Day Two). After each group has presented its opposing arguments, encourage debate among groups.

Exploring the options (15-25 minutes)

Objective: This discussion activity compels students to apply the options to a different context.

1. *Optional Activity:* With the role play concluded, ask students to evaluate the options through the eyes of different people in the former Soviet Union. For example, which option would be most appealing to a Russian naval officer serving in the Black Sea? A teacher of Byelorussian literature? A cotton farmer in Uzbekistan? An Ossetian political leader in Georgia? A Russian factory worker in Kazakhstan? Advise students to scan the background article entitled *The Republics of the Soviet Union.*

2. Ask students to evaluate the options in the context of promoting democracy in the former Soviet Union. Note that advocates of both options one and two applaud democratic values and yet take different paths toward achieving their goal. What are the prerequisites for establishing democracy in the republics of the former Soviet Union? What can the United States do, if anything, to ensure the development of democracy? How should our past experiences in promoting democracy around the world guide current policy? Students should recognize that each of the three options approaches the issue of promoting democracy with a distinct worldview.

Homework: Students should complete *Focusing Your Thoughts* and *My Option Four*. Distribute the second page of the options (with beliefs and arguments) if they were not included in the Student Text.

DAY FIVE

Beyond option four (45 minutes)

Objective: This exercise encourages students to develop their own ideas for U.S. policy toward the former Soviet Union. Students apply the options they have crafted to the question of providing economic aid to the republics of the former Soviet Union.

1. Poll students on which option they prefer. Ask students for their opinions on the most and least appealing features of each option. Read through the list of beliefs, asking students for their reaction to each belief. Call on students to explain the relationship between their beliefs and the Option Four they developed.

2. Distribute *Examining a Current Issue: U.S. Economic Aid.* Review the contents with the students. Ask students to respond to each of the three questions from the perspective of the options they have created.

3. *Extra Challenge:* As homework, instruct students to write a letter based on their own options to the editor of a local newspaper or to a member of Congress. The opening paragraph of the letter should summarize the answers to the first two questions of *My Option Four*, while later paragraphs should deal with the issue of economic aid (see *Examining a Current Issue*).

ALTERNATIVE THREE-DAY LESSON PLAN

DAY ONE: See Day One of the Five-Day Lesson Plan.

DAY TWO: Collect the study guide. Instruct students to write down two supporting arguments and two opposing arguments for each of the options. Urge students to use information in the background articles to develop their arguments. Call on students to share their arguments. List the most persuasive on the chalkboard. Ask students to review the arguments on the second page of each option. Which arguments are most persuasive? Ask students to put themselves in the role of President Bush. Which option would they adopt for the United States? What beliefs about the U.S. role in the world would guide their decision? How would changes in the former Soviet Union affect the choice of options? As homework, students should complete *Focusing Your Thoughts* and *My Option Four.*

DAY THREE: See Day Five of the Five-Day Lesson Plan.

President Bush Addresses the Nation

Following is the text of a televised address from the Oval Office on December 25, 1991, by President George Bush

Good evening and Merry Christmas to all Americans across our great country. During these last few months, you and I have witnessed one of the greatest dramas of the twentieth century, the historic and revolutionary transformation of a totalitarian dictatorship, the Soviet Union, and the liberation of its peoples. As we celebrate Christmas, this day of peace and hope, I thought we should take just a few minutes to reflect on what these events mean for us as Americans.

For over forty years, the United States led the West in the struggle against communism and the threat it posed to our most precious values. This struggle shaped the lives of all Americans. It forced all nations to live under the specter of nuclear destruction. That confrontation is now over. The nuclear threat, while far from gone, is receding. Eastern Europe is free. The Soviet Union itself is no more.

This is victory for democracy and freedom. It's a victory for the moral force of our values. Every American can take pride in this victory, from the millions of men and women who have served our country in uniform to millions of Americans who supported their country and a strong defense under nine presidents.

New, independent nations have emerged out of the wreckage of the Soviet empire. Last weekend, these former republics formed a Commonwealth of Independent States. This act marks the end of the old Soviet Union, signified today by Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to resign as president.

I'd like to express on behalf of the American people my gratitude to Mikhail Gorbachev for years of sustained commitment to world peace and for his intellect, vision, and courage. I spoke with Mikhail Gorbachev this morning. We reviewed the many accomplishments of the last few years and spoke of hope for the future. Mikhail Gorbachev's revolutionary policies transformed the Soviet Union. His policies permitted the peoples of Russia and the other republics to cast aside decades of oppression and establish the foundations of freedom. His legacy guarantees him an honored place in history and provides a solid basis for the United States to work in equally constructive ways with his successors.

The United States applauds and supports the historic choice for freedom by the new states of the commonwealth. We congratulate them on the peaceful and democratic path they have chosen, and for their careful attention to nuclear control and safety during this transition.

Despite a potential for instability and chaos, these events clearly serve our national interests.

We stand tonight before a new world of hope and possibilities for our children, a world we could not have contemplated a few years ago. The challenge for us now is to engage these new states in sustaining the peace and building a more prosperous future.

And so today, based on commitments and assurances given to us by some of these states concerning nuclear safety, democracy and free markets, I am announcing some important steps designed to begin this process.

First, the United States recognizes and welcomes the emergence of a free, independent, and democratic Russia led by its courageous president, Boris Yeltsin. Our embassy in Moscow will remain there as our embassy to Russia. We will support Russia's assumption of the USSR's seat as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. I look forward to working closely with President Yeltsin in support of his efforts to bring democratic and market reform to Russia.

Second, the United States also recognizes the independence of Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Kyrgystan -- all states that have made specific commitments to us. We will move quickly to establish diplomatic relations with these states and build new ties to them. We will sponsor membership in the United Nations for those not already members.

Third, the United States recognizes today as independent states the remaining six former Soviet republics: Moldova, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikstan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan. We will establish diplomatic relations with them when we are satisfied that they have made commitments to responsible security policies and democratic principles, as have the other states we recognized today.

These dramatic events come at a time when Americans are also facing challenges here at home. I know that for many of you these are difficult times, and I want all Americans to know that I am committed to attacking our economic problems at home with the same determination we brought to winning the Cold War. I am confident that we will meet this challenge as we have so many times before, but we cannot if we retreat into isolationism. We will only succeed in this interconnected world by continuing to lead the fight for free people and free and fair trade. A free and prosperous global economy is essential for America's prosperity. That means jobs and economic growth right here at home.

This is a day of great hope for all Americans. Our enemies have become our partners, committed to building democratic and civil societies. They ask for our support, and we will give it to them. We will do it because as Americans we can do no less. For our children, we must offer them the guarantee of a peaceful and prosperous future, a future grounded in a world built on strong democratic principles, free from the specter of global conflict.

May God bless the people of the new nations in the Commonwealth of Independent States. And on this special day of peace on earth, good will toward men, may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Options in Brief

Option 1: Strengthen the Newly Independent Republics

The remarkable political changes that brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union have made it possible for each of the newly independent republics to take control of their future. The newly independent republics have the right to determine their own future, and we must treat them as equal members of the international community. This is the only way to guarantee a fundamental and lasting change in the former Soviet Union and a permanent end to the old empire. This course of action is the only way to remain true to our own founding principles and promote the development of peaceful democracy in the former Soviet Union.

Option 2: Support a Stable Russia

The collapse of the Soviet Union marks a victory for U.S. foreign policy while raising new worries for Americans. In the current atmosphere of uncertainty, the United States must act as the anchor of international order. That means making the stability of Russia our top priority in the former Soviet Union. Ultimately, only Russia has the power to maintain stability in this potentially explosive region that includes more than 30,000 nuclear warheads and one hundred national groups. The United States must play an active role in guiding Russia toward a system much like our own. After struggling so long to defeat our Cold War enemy, we would now be foolish not to lend a hand to our new-found friend.

Option 3: Mind Our Own Business

For nearly forty-five years after World War II, we stationed troops in Europe, sent our forces around the world, and spent hundreds of billions of dollars to counter the Soviet threat. But today the Soviet Union is no more. We should take this opportunity to turn our attention on our own pressing domestic concerns and focus our foreign policy on the defense of the Americas. The United States should serve as a role model for the world to follow -- a model of stability, democracy and economic prosperity. If we want other nations to continue to look to the United States for moral leadership, however, we must remedy our domestic problems. The people of the new republics know best what they must do to reform their own society. Meanwhile, this rare time of peace gives us an opportunity to put our house in order, and to remain a society worthy of emulation.

Name:_____

Study Guide

Instructions: Answer the following questions using information from the three background articles.

The Republics of the Soviet Union

1. How was Lenin's notion of self-determination for the peoples of the USSR changed by Stalin?

2. Why is Josef Stalin regarded as the most brutal Soviet leader?

3. What were some of the main concerns of people in the republics at the time that Mikhail Gorbachev came to power?

4. Which republic or republics suffered the most under Soviet rule? Explain your answer.

5. In your opinion, what is the most potentially explosive nationalities problem facing the republics of the former Soviet Union?

The Economy of the Soviet Union

1. How would Karl Marx have been surprised by the communist revolution led by Lenin?

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2. Why is Josef Stalin called the leader of "the second communist revolution" in the Soviet Union?

3. Which parts of Stalin's economic policies left the greatest impact on the Soviet Union?

4. How did Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* differ from past Soviet economic policies?

5. Why do many experts predict that the republics of the former Soviet Union will continue to face enormous economic difficulties?

Nuclear Weapons in the Soviet Union

1. What new concerns about nuclear weapons have been raised by the collapse of the Soviet Union?

2. Why are some Kazakhs reluctant to turn over the nuclear missiles in their republic to Russia?

3. Explain the connection between Saddam Hussein and U.S. concerns about Soviet nuclear weapons.

4. Did Americans have reason to worry about Soviet nuclear weapons during the August coup? Explain your answer.

Exploring Underlying Beliefs

1. The breakup of the Soviet Union into small states threatens international peace and stability, which are the chief concerns of U.S. foreign policy. **(Option 2)**

2. With the Cold War over, the greatest national security problems facing the United States are right here at home. **(Option 3)**

3. The United States has a special responsibility to help small nations struggling to control their own destinies. **(Option 1)**

4. Interfering in the affairs of other countries has caused more harm than good for U.S. interests. **(Option 3)**

5. Empires trample on the rights of the peoples they rule. **(Option 1)**

6. In the age of nuclear weapons, the United States must work to preserve the cooperative relationship we have established with the other nuclear superpower. **(Option 2)**

Considering Your Option

Option ____

Instructions: With your group, answer the following questions from the viewpoint of your option.

1. What role should the United States play in the world?

2. How should the collapse of the Soviet Union affect overall U.S. foreign policy?

3. In developing U.S. policy toward the former Soviet Union, what should we learn from history?

4. Are there problems in the former Soviet Union that the United States must address? Explain your answer.

5. In summary, why should the United States adopt your option?

Advising the President

Day One--Supporting Arguments

Your Assignment: Your group has been called upon to advise the President about the future of U.S. policy toward the former Soviet Union. You must explain why the United States should adopt your group's option. You and your fellow group members will be evaluated on how well you advocate the viewpoint of your option.

Organizing Your Group: Each member of your group will take a specific role. Below is a brief explanation of the responsibilities for each role.

1. *Spokesperson:* Your job is to present the option of your group to the class. In preparing your presentation, you will receive help from the other members of your group. They will answer the questions of *Considering Your Option* according to the viewpoint of their role. You must then choose the strongest arguments from each role to organize the most persuasive presentation possible. Read your option and the background articles to build a strong case for your option.

2. *Secretary of State:* Your job is to advise the spokesperson of your group on why your option makes sense from the standpoint of U.S. foreign policy. Keep this in mind as you complete *Considering Your Option*. To answer these questions, read your option and the background articles. Pay special attention to the changes that took place after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power.

3. *Member of Congress:* Your job is to advise the spokesperson of your group on why the majority of Americans would support your option. As a member of Congress, you understand the issues that concern average Americans. Keep these concerns in mind as you complete *Considering Your Option*. To answer these questions, read your option and the background articles. Pay special attention to the issues that you think would most concern average Americans.

4. *Historian:* Your job is to advise the spokesperson of your group on why the lessons of history justify your option. Keep this in mind as you complete *Considering Your Option*. To answer these questions, read your option and the background articles. Pay special attention to what we should learn from the past in developing U.S. policy today. The "What lessons should we learn from history?" section in your option should also be helpful.

Day Two--Opposing Arguments

Your Assignment: During Day One, the President heard presentations supporting each of the three options. On Day Two, your group has an opportunity to point out the weaknesses in the other options. To prepare for Day Two, each member of your group should write down at least two opposing arguments for each of the other options. You should also review the background articles. In preparing your questions, keep in mind that each member of your group has a specific role to play.

At the beginning of the period on Day Two, everyone in your group should help the spokesperson to review all the opposing arguments produced by your group. The spokesperson should shape four strong arguments aimed against each of the other two options (eight in all). After each of the groups has presented opposing arguments, your teacher may give you a chance to answer your critics. In this case, any member of your group may respond.

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Focusing Your Thoughts

Instructions: You have had an opportunity to consider all three options on U.S. policy toward republics of the former Soviet Union. As you know, each of the options was written from the perspective of someone who strongly supports that course of action. Now it is your turn to look at each of the options from your own perspective. Try each one on for size. Think about how they address your own concerns and hopes. You will find that each has its own risks and tradeoffs, advantages and disadvantages. Your assignment is to create an Option Four that reflects your own beliefs and opinions. You may borrow heavily from one option, or you may combine ideas from two or three options. Or you may take a new approach altogether. There are, of course, no perfect solutions. And there is no right or wrong answer. Instead, you should strive to craft an option that is logical and persuasive.

Ranking the Options

Imagine you are a White House adviser and the President wants your opinion on which option the United States should follow. Rank the options, with "1" being the best option available for our country to follow.

___ **OPTION ONE: Strengthen the Newly Independent Republics**

___ **OPTION TWO: Support a Stable Russia**

___ **OPTION THREE: Mind Our Own Business**

Beliefs

Considering the statements below will help you answer the first question of *My Option Four.* Rate each of them according to your personal beliefs:

1 = Strongly Support
2 = Support
3 = Oppose
4 = Strongly Oppose
5 = Undecided

___ The United States has the responsibility to stand up for the rights of small nations that seek our help.

___ War and chaos in faraway countries threaten our own future.

___ The greatest threats facing our country are all at home: a weak economy, budget deficits, crime, drugs, poverty, AIDS, and homelessness.

___ We have no right to stick our noses in the political affairs of other countries.

___ Nuclear weapons represent the most important threat to the security of Americans.

___ Every people must be in control of its own affairs to achieve its full potential.

___ Americans should be very worried about the dangers connected with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

___ With the Soviet Union gone, the United States has a historic opportunity to implant democratic values where communism once prevailed.

___ The United States can no longer afford to help every struggling country that appeals for economic aid.

Name:_____

My Option Four

1. What beliefs serve as the foundation of your option?

2. Are there problems in the former Soviet Union that the United States must address? Explain your answer.

3. What should the United States do over the next five years?

What are the two strongest arguments opposing your option?

A.

B.

What are the two strongest arguments supporting your option?

A.

B.

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Examining a Current Issue
U.S. Economic Aid

For the last several days, you have discussed several directions for U.S. foreign policy toward the former Soviet Union. You have also had an opportunity to craft you own option for the United States to pursue. These options should help you understand the broad, general issues involved in U.S. relations with the newly independent republics. Likewise, they should serve as a framework for examining specific questions. One such question concerns U.S. economic aid.

You probably already know that the people of the former Soviet Union are facing many economic problems, both this winter and beyond. Americans are already debating how our country should respond to the difficulties in the former Soviet Union. Your assignment is to apply your Option Four to this issue. Ask yourself: "If the United States adopted my option, how would we deal with the question of economic aid?" This is a complex issue. In order to make a decision, there are several preliminary questions you should answer:

1. **What should be the underlying goal of U.S. assistance?**
   Should we give only humanitarian relief, such as food and clothing, just as we offer to cold and hungry people in other parts of the world? Should we give aid to leaders of the newly independent republics to prevent short-term political chaos and maintain stability. Or should we give enough assistance to enable the republics to make the deeper structural changes that are necessary if the former Soviet Union is to compete in the world economy?

2. **What conditions, if any, should be placed on U.S. assistance?**
   Should the United States require that the republics meet certain standards before receiving aid? What issues should the United States insist be addressed? When President George Bush recognized the independence of the former Soviet republics on December 25, 1991, he said that the United States would establish diplomatic relations with only six of them. The United States, Bush added, would not open relations with the other six republics until they committed themselves to "responsible security policies and democratic principles." How important is democratic reform to your option? What other issues should be tied to economic aid? Nuclear proliferation? Treatment of ethnic minorities? Relations with other republics? Defense policy? Progress toward free market economics?

3. **How much aid should the United States provide?**
   This is especially difficult to answer. Even experts in the former Soviet Union cannot agree on how much aid is needed to turn the economies of the republics around. For purposes of comparison, consider the figures below. Reviewing these sums will help you come up with an estimate of how much aid should be given under your option.

Fiscal year 1991 U.S. foreign aid budget:	$ 17	billion
Fiscal year 1991 U.S. education budget:	$ 43	billion
Fiscal year 1991 U.S. defense budget:	$299	billion
Fiscal year 1991 U.S. deficit:	$269	billion
Fiscal year 1991 U.S. aid to Israel and Egypt:	$ 5	billion
1985-86 U.S. aid for Ethiopian famine relief	$784	million
1948-1952 Marshall Plan* (in 1991 dollars):	$ 64	billion

*Under the Marshall Plan, the United States helped Western Europe rebuild after World War II.

Extra Challenge Homework: Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper or to a member of Congress based on your Option Four. The opening paragraph of your letter should summarize your beliefs and your view of our country's need to address the problems of the former Soviet Union. (Review the answers to the first two questions of *My Option Four.*) You should then explain your option's approach to economic aid. This paragraph should include your answers to the five questions above.

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The Republics of the Soviet Union

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was made up of fifteen **republics**. Russia was by far the biggest of these -- comprising about three-quarters of the territory and half the population -- but the peoples of the smaller republics also had deep roots in the land.

The USSR, or the Soviet Union, was largely built on the territory of the Russian Empire. At its height in the 19th century, the Russian Empire stretched from the lands of present-day Poland all the way across Eurasia to Alaska. When the empire of the **tsars** collapsed in 1917 and the Communists came to power, many of the non-Russian peoples of the region attempted to create independent states. By the early 1920s, however, Communist leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin had regained most of the territory of the old Russian Empire. Unlike the Russian Empire, the new communist state was made up of national republics. Lenin assured the non-Russian peoples that they would control their own affairs.

Lenin's promise to the non-Russian peoples, though, conflicted with the goals of his successor, Josef Stalin. This became clear in the 1930s when Stalin launched his economic revolution. Under Stalin's rule, the Soviet Union's resources were channeled toward a crash program of **industrialization**. Tens of millions of peasants were forced to give up their land and join collective farms. In the process, Stalin concentrated power in the Soviet capital of Moscow. The non-Russian republics paid a heavy price. In Ukraine, for example, as many as six million people starved as a result of Stalin's policies, while in Kazakhstan nearly one-third of the local population died.

After Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet leaders relied largely on less brutal measures to keep a tight hold on decision-making power and maintain control over the non-Russian republics. In the 1960s, Soviet leaders hoped to erase the distinctions among national groups by molding a new Soviet people based on communist values. This campaign was accompanied by efforts to emphasize Russian language, literature, and culture as the common heritage of all Soviet citizens.

The reforms that **Mikhail Gorbachev** initiated in the late 1980s marked a turning point for Soviet society. Peoples in the non-Russian republics were among the first to take advantage of the new atmosphere of *glasnost* (openness) to voice their concerns. At the top of many agendas was resentment toward Moscow's domination of the republics.

By 1991, the struggle between the central government and the republics had emerged as the most divisive issue in the Soviet Union. Six of the fifteen republics announced plans to seek independence. Meanwhile, Gorbachev offered to give the remaining nine republics much of Moscow's power if they would agree to sign a new union treaty. In August, hard-line communists staged a coup in hopes of rolling back reforms and maintaining the central government's power. The coup, however, was defeated after three days, leaving leaders of the republics with more power than ever.

The Soviet Union quickly crumbled after the coup. Russian President **Boris Yeltsin** moved boldly to transfer power from Gorbachev's central government to the Russian Republic. At the same time, the three Baltic republics were recognized as independent states and given their own seats at the United Nations. One by one, ten of the remaining twelve republics likewise declared their independence from Moscow. In December 1991, Russia, Ukraine, and Byelorussia (now called Belarus) founded the Commonwealth of Independent States and put an end to attempts at reviving the old union. All of the other republics except Georgia quickly joined. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev officially resigned as president of the Soviet Union. Within hours, President George Bush announced that the United States would recognize the independence of the republics. Officially, the Soviet Union had come to an end.

As independent states, all of the republics face similar problems in untangling their ties with their Soviet past. Economically, the Soviet system tightly bound each republic to the center and to one another. Factories everywhere are still dependent on supplies from other areas of the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, border disputes are likely to sour relations between neighboring republics, especially since sixty million people live outside of their native republics. Many non-Russians fear that Russia's enormous size and control of the Soviet nuclear arsenal will pose a threat to their independence. Already, Russia and Ukraine have butted heads over possession of the naval fleet in the Black Sea while Russian leaders have warned that they would protect the rights of the twenty-five million Russians living outside of their homeland. So far, Russia has sought to resolve these issues peacefully. Nonetheless, many non-Russians remain concerned about the long-term ambitions of their huge neighbor.

The Economy of the Soviet Union

In October 1917, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin took power in the crumbling Russian Empire and proclaimed a workers' state. At the time, Lenin and his followers were hoping that their action would spark revolutions throughout the world. Their dream was to reshape all of human society according to the principles of communism.

Lenin was guided by Karl Marx, a political philosopher who laid out the theoretical foundations of communism. Marx developed his theory in the middle of the 19th century while Europe was undergoing the Industrial Revolution. He believed that capitalism was to blame for society's ills, and predicted that the size and the misery of the working class would continue to grow. Eventually, according to Marx, the workers would rise up to overthrow the capitalist ruling class.

Unlike Marx, Lenin dedicated his life to actively prodding history forward. When war and hunger forced Russian **tsar** Nicholas II to give up his throne in 1917, the Russian Empire had a very small working class. Most followers of Marx believed that capitalism would have to set down deeper roots in Russia before the country would be ready for a communist revolution. They saw a democratic revolution in February 1917 as a positive step forward. Lenin, however, was not satisfied. Instead, he rallied support among the desperate population around the slogan "Land, Bread, Peace," and fought a bloody civil war against the opponents of communism.

By the early 1920s, Lenin had won a military victory. The Soviet Union had been established largely on the territory of the Russian Empire. Six years of war, though, had left Lenin's country economically devastated. The Soviet leader had little choice but to put off constructing a communist society and was instead compelled to give his people time to recover. Lenin's compromise plan -- the New Economic Policy (NEP) -- imposed government control over big industries but allowed peasants, craftsmen, and small businesspeople to resume their old lifestyles.

The most important economic revolution in the Soviet Union did not take place until Josef Stalin came to power. Stalin believed that his country had to become an industrial giant in order to defend its revolution against the capitalist world. To achieve his goals, Stalin in the 1930s created a **command economy** with power concentrated in Moscow, the Soviet capital. The central government controlled every aspect of economic planning, deciding what would be produced, where it would be made, and how much it would cost.

To feed workers for the new factories being built, Stalin imposed the policy of **collectivization**. Throughout the Soviet Union, peasants were forced to give up their land and join large farms run by government officials. Starvation and official brutality resulted in the death of ten to fifteen million Soviet peasants, but in the end Stalin gained a firm grip over food supplies.

The command economy remained intact for more than three decades after Stalin's death. Although the Soviet economy began to sputter after the mid-1970s, officials did not undertake a major overhaul of the system until **Mikhail Gorbachev** came to power. In 1987, Gorbachev announced his program of *perestroika* (restructuring). His plan was to improve economic efficiency while maintaining the stability of Soviet society. In charting a middle course, however, Gorbachev was left with few allies. Directors of the old command economy protested the loss of discipline under *perestroika*, while supporters of a free market approach complained that bureaucrats still had too much power.

In August 1991, hard-line communists staged a coup in hopes of rolling back the reform effort. Their defeat hastened the final collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. At the same time, production in the Soviet Union continued to slide rapidly downward while prices skyrocketed. As 1992 began, leaders of the newly independent republics faced many obstacles to economic reform. Among them:

--The old Soviet currency, the ruble, is almost worthless at home and abroad. Millions of people now prefer to trade goods and services -- for example, shoe repair in exchange for a chicken -- rather than accept rubles.

--Industries use outdated equipment and produce goods of little value. To become efficient, they would need to lay off millions of workers and attract investment to buy new technology.

--Under the Soviet system, the government kept prices artificially low on most goods. In January 1992, price controls were lifted. Now, consumers are finding that salary increases are not keeping pace with rising prices.

Nuclear Weapons in the Former Soviet Union

During the era of **Mikhail Gorbachev,** military tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union dramatically eased. Events of the past few months, however, have raised a new set of concerns about the future of the Soviet military. In August 1991, hard-line communists attempted to wrest power from the Gorbachev government. Although their coup was defeated in three days, U.S. experts are still shaken by what might have been. Even the official collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 -- hailed by President George Bush as "a victory for democracy and freedom" -- contains many potential dangers. The Soviet Union, after all, had the largest armed forces in the world and over 30,000 nuclear warheads. Neither the conventional forces nor the nuclear weapons disappeared with the demise of the Soviet Union. Instead, instability in the former Soviet Union has kept the Soviet military threat alive even though the Soviet Union no longer exists.

Nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union can be roughly divided into two groups: **strategic,** which are missiles capable of reaching the United States, and **tactical,** such as short-range missiles and battlefield nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union's strategic nuclear weapons were based in only four republics: Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Byelorussia (now called Belarus). Although eighty-five percent of these long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are stationed in Russia, that still leaves a sizable force in the other three republics. Roughly 1,200 nuclear warheads are in Ukraine, one thousand are in Kazakhstan, and another one hundred are in Byelorussia. These strategic missiles can be launched only with codes from the central command authority. When Gorbachev resigned as president of the Soviet Union in December 1991, he turned these codes over to Russian President **Boris Yeltsin.**

The Soviet nuclear arsenal has become a source of increased tension between Russia and the other republics. Many non-Russians are uneasy with the notion of Russia being the only nuclear power in the region, especially after Russian officials suggested that their republic's borders with Ukraine and Kazakhstan should be reconsidered. Yeltsin later reassured his neighbors that borders would not be revised. With the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), leaders of Ukraine and Byelorussia pledged to turn over control of nuclear weapons on their territory to Russia. Kazakhstan's president did not sign the agreement, although most experts view his move as more of a negotiating tactic than a desire to possess nuclear weapons.

Tactical weapons have also been a major concern of U.S. policymakers. Until the early months of 1990, the Soviet tactical nuclear force was scattered among all fifteen republics. Soviet leaders, however, began transferring weapons out of less stable republics in 1990. Russian officials now maintain that all of the tactical weapons in the former Soviet Union are stored within the Russian Republic. Still, some experts question Russia's claim.

Equally worrisome is the possibility that other countries, or even terrorist groups, may seek to take advantage of the Soviet Union's collapse to obtain nuclear technology. Several nations in the Third World have already invested billions of dollars to develop their own nuclear weapons. In the case of Iraq, Saddam Hussein has bought almost all the components needed for his nuclear program abroad. Moreover, U.S. experts estimate that up to 2,000 scientists in the former Soviet Union have the technical knowledge to make nuclear arms. Under the old system, these scientists worked in secret defense cities and received many privileges. Now, while their homeland is suffering economic chaos, they are receiving tempting job offers from Iraq, Libya and elsewhere.

Finally, the August 1991 coup focused attention on another dimension of the Soviet nuclear arsenal: the system of command and control over nuclear weapons. Many Americans feared that the hard-line coup organizers had the power to launch nuclear weapons. In the United States, the president always travels with what is called the "football" -- a briefcase with the codes needed to fire nuclear missiles. The Soviets had a different system involving both the Soviet president and the defense minister. Even though the defense minister at the time, Dmitri Yazov, was part of the coup, nuclear missiles could not have been fired without the consent of former Soviet president Gorbachev. One of the safeguards on the Soviet "football" required the president to provide some kind of unique personal identification, such as a palm print, voice print, or retina scan. This would have meant that only Gorbachev himself could have activated the codes in the briefcase and carried out his part of the process. Now that Yeltsin is in possession of the nuclear codes, experts believe that Russia will retain most aspects of the old Soviet command and control structure.

Topics for Further Consideration

This discussion of the Soviet Union and its collapse may have raised other questions and issues that go beyond contemporary U.S. foreign policy. In fact, many of the questions currently being debated in the former Soviet Union are similar to questions that have come up during periods of both U.S. and European history. Below are a few of the topics that might be interesting to consider after a discussion of the current situation in the former Soviet Union.

The U.S. Civil War. One of the fundamental questions raised by the struggle between the central government and the republics of the Soviet Union concerns self-determination. Specifically, do all states have the right to self-determination, including the right to leave the union? Although it was under very different circumstances, this question was important to the United States in the 1850s and 1860s, and led to our Civil War. Abraham Lincoln did not believe States should be allowed to secede from the Union. Consider his "Gettysburg Address": He argued that the Civil War was a test to see "whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and dedicated, can long endure." Later, Lincoln argued that the war was being fought to prove once and for all that slavery was wrong, and that it was no longer a debatable topic. Should states have been allowed to secede from the Union? Did they have an unquestionable right to self-determination? Or are there some things which supersede self-determination and are above popular debate, such as preserving a union and promoting the "greater good"? Was Lincoln right to use force to support his view?

The Creation of the U.S. Constitution. Several years went by between the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the ratification of the U.S. Constitution (1789). But in the Soviet Union and the newly independent republics the entire process seems greatly accelerated: in fact, after the August coup failed, Soviet legislators spent just one weekend in September writing new guidelines for their government. One of the first things that Soviet legislators asked for that weekend were copies of the Federalist Papers, a series of articles defending the new federal system created at the U.S. Constitutional Convention. What lessons might these papers teach the leaders of the former Soviet Union? What problems did the independent colonies have that brought them together to form a federation? What problems did they have when they built a federal system? What made it easier for the U.S. to form a federal system?

World Empires. The Soviet Union was said to be the world's last empire. What does that mean? What is an empire? What happens when they break up (think about empires such as the Ottoman, British and Austrian-Hungarian, for example)? Do they all break apart the same way? It is also being said that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was neither a Union, Soviet, really Socialist, nor among Republics (If that sounds familiar, the same sort of statement was once made about the Holy Roman Empire). Was the Soviet Union a "typical" empire? Why or why not?

American Political Philosophy. The underlying philosophy that has guided U.S. foreign policy has changed over time. In the earliest days of the republic, presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson warned the U.S. against becoming involved in the "Old World" problems of Europe and encouraged a more isolationist course. After World War II, the U.S. changed from avoiding international affairs to becoming an active participant helping to promote freedom around the world. This idea is summed up by President John Kennedy's inaugural address when he said the U.S. would "pay any price, bear any burden...to assure the survival and success of liberty." Today, the emphasis has again shifted. While the U.S. is still an active participant, the goal is to promote order and stability in the world, an idea summed up by President George Bush's call for a New World Order. What are the differences between supporting "isolationism," "freedom," and "order" in the world? Are there any common beliefs between supporters of these different philosophies? Compare Washington's Farewell Address, Kennedy's Inaugural Address and recent speeches by President Bush on the New World Order. Who makes the best case for what the U.S. role should be?

What is the future of nations? This is a very broad question, but one that is currently very important in Europe. Throughout the 1800s, the general rule was that states wanted to expand. The largest and strongest nations became industrialized and created empires by taking control of territory around the world. After World War I, the emphasis changed. Empire-building ended and national groups began to demand that the empires be divided up so that they could get their own countries. Today in Europe, there are two different movements at once. Many nations in Western Europe are taking steps to create one Europe without national borders. It is the hope of many that people will eventually think of themselves as "Europeans" instead of "British" of "Spaniards." At the same time, in Eastern Europe, people who have been under the control of communist governments for forty-five years are doing the exact opposite. In addition to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia has fought a civil war over the efforts of Croatia and Slovenia to secede. And in Czechoslovakia, there is an effort to divide that country into the Czech nation and the Slovak nation. Considering European history -- and your own feelings about nationalism -- what do you think the word "nation" will mean in the future?

Suggested Reading

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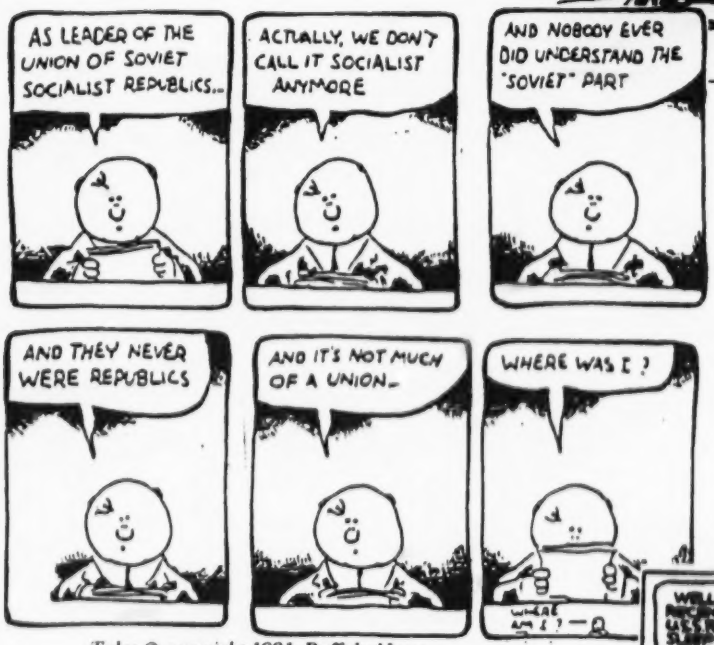
AS LEADER OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS...
ACTUALLY, WE DON'T CALL IT SOCIALIST ANYMORE
AND NOBODY EVER DID UNDERSTAND THE "SOVIET" PART
AND THEY NEVER WERE REPUBLICS
AND IT'S NOT MUCH OF A UNION.
WHERE WAS I?

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WELL, I GUESS WITH RECENT EVENTS IN THE U.S.S.R. WE CAN ALL SLEEP A LITTLE EASIER.
A HARDLINE COUP FORCES THE FALL OF THE REFORMERS...
COMMUNISM DEFEATED. THE K.G.B. NEUTRALIZED...
FREEDOM FOR THE BALTICS. REFORMS GOING FORWARD...
27,000 NUCLEAR WARHEADS UNDER LOOSE CENTRAL MILITARY CONTROL...

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FOLLOW-UP FORM: Please take a few moments to report on your use of this curriculum unit.

FACING A DISINTEGRATED SOVIET UNION

Alternatives for Public Debate and Policy Development

Date(s) used: Course in which you used it:

Grade and level of students:

Number of Students:

Did you use the lesson plans as they appear in the material or did you alter them? If so, how? What worked and what was less than perfect?

Were your students able to "try on" other perspectives?

Did your students find any of the Options especially appealing or unappealing? Why?

One of the goals of this unit is to encourage students to become more attentive to public policy issues. Do you have any evidence that this happened?

Other comments:

NAME_____ SCHOOL_____

ADDRESS_____CITY_____STATE____ZIP____

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS MATERIAL?_____

Please return this form to:

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